

Knowing in Context: A Postcolonial Analysis of Contemporary Leadership
Development and Leadership Education

Submitted by Vanessa Iwowo to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership Studies in December 2011

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother Josephine, whose life-long sacrifices have laid the foundation for this thesis, and made me the responsible citizen that I have become.

Acknowledgement

I am eternally grateful to GOD for His unfailing love which has seen me through the entire research process; and without which I would never have made it. I remain thankful to Him for His infinite grace that has girded and encompassed me in this time; as well as for the many opportunities to grow and develop afforded me during my studies at the University of Exeter.

My deepest gratitude goes to the University of Exeter, particularly the Centre for Leadership Studies (CLS), for the financial support availed me to pursue my studies, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I have greatly valued and appreciated. I also extend my deepest appreciation my Supervisors – Scott Taylor and Emma Jeanes, for their useful comments and suggestions over countless interactive sessions and often critical periods, without which it would have been extremely difficult to complete this thesis. I especially thank Dr. Tim Coles of the Exeter Business School for believing in my work and potential, against the odds.

I am most thankful to my husband, Gibson Etemewei for the prayers and constant encouragement received during the preparation of this thesis and I am equally very grateful to my family – Juanetta Iwowo, Samantha Iwowo, Mrs Victoria Okonyia, Henry & Joe Iwowo, and particularly, to Dr. & Mrs Felix Oviasu for their moral and financial support of my education, all of which have over time enabled me to progress through to this final stage of formal education.

I also acknowledge the staunch support of Dr. Ifeolu Akintunde, and also that of Nkiru & Uvie Brigue; which helped me to carry on, even in times of great difficulty.

Finally, I wish to thank Professor Jonathan Gosling, Professor Annie Pye, Dr Richard Bolden, Dr Anne O'Brien, Dr Beverley Hawkins and Dr. Inma Adarves-Yorno (all of CLS); Dr Franca Ovadje of the Lagos Business School, as well as Professor Peter Case and Dr Svetlana Cicmil of UWE, Bristol; for their kind assistance at various times during the past four years. I am most grateful indeed.

ABSTRACT

The thesis contributes to the emerging critical perspective on global management education and leadership development in a multi-faceted world. It takes a critical look at leadership, particularly with respect to how this is conceptualised and understood, and also, what are the implications for such epistemological leanings. This is in light of recent criticisms of global management education, and other salient questions of knowledge imperialism and ethnocentrism that arise with respect to how knowledge is created and represented. Furthermore, there are even more pertinent questions of universality and contextual applicability, given the relevant issue of cultural diversity and what many researchers increasingly suggest is the socially constructed nature of leadership. To this end, it has been suggested that there might be a possibility of contextual dissonance between mainstream leadership paradigms and the lived socio-cultural reality of many non-western societies. This is in view of the fact that there are as many definitions of leadership as those who have tried to define it (Stodgill, 1970), such that there is now no one universal 'truth' about leadership (Billsberry, 2007) because leadership is a process of reality construction that is grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), so that it means 'different things to different people' (Gill, 2006; p.7).

This thesis therefore investigates the contemporary practice of leadership development/leadership education and in particular, questions its application as a management learning intervention in the contexts within which it is deployed. It explores the pertinent question of contextual dissonance and in this, critically examines leadership development as a catalyst for organisational change within

the context of a global non-profit organisation, and again, as a tool for management development in the context of a non-western society.

Findings indicate the presence of a strong community orientation that is seemingly consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of indigenous community practices in Africa and that reflect a noticeable degree of contextual dissonance between mainstream paradigms of leadership and the lived experiential reality of programme participants in the context understudied i.e. Nigeria. Subsequently, this thesis proposes a model of leadership development that may begin to address this contextual gap; one that although acknowledges the conceptual importance of the mainstream, is fundamentally accommodating of the local knowledge frameworks within which it is deployed.

Overall, the research contributes to understandings of Leadership Development in that it uncovers how ‘knowledge’ about leadership is conceptualised within the studied context and it generates new insight into how leadership development as a contemporary practice is constructed within this environment; in particular, how this is negotiated and engaged with relative to that society. Secondly, it advances a model through which contemporary management education interventions may account for the lived socio-cultural reality of the contexts within which they are applied.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This thesis analyses the dynamics, processes and challenges associated with developing and enhancing leadership capacity in a rapidly globalizing world. Against the backdrop of internationalisation, world-class organizations are afforded more inter-connectedness between their various member organizations – where this is the case, and as many seek to improve their internal processes, others aim to standardise and internationalise these across the board. In terms of management education, and particularly leadership development (LD), programmes are being designed to reflect this trend. In light of this, there have been criticisms with regards to the globalisation of management education and important questions of intellectual imperialism, focusing on the potential for ethnocentrism and marginalisation in the process of knowledge creation. Furthermore, there are even more pertinent questions of universality and contextual applicability given the relevant issue of cultural diversity and what many researchers increasingly suggest is the socially constructed nature of the concept of leadership.

That ‘there are as many definitions of leadership as those who have attempted to define it’ (Stodgill, 1970, p 1.) is indeed a prominent observation. Against the background of various definitions of this social phenomenon, the assertion that there is no one universal ‘truth’ about leadership (Billsberry, 2009) coupled with the realisation that leadership is a process of reality construction which is

grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), meaning different things to different people (Gill, 2006; p.7), it has become necessary to conceptually question the contemporary practice of leadership development as a management learning intervention. The inter-related arguments that knowledge is constructed (Grint, 1997), contextual (See Goffman, 1986; Hamilton and Bean, 2005; Hearn and Ninan, 2003) and a cultural contingent (Hofstede, 1991; Lord and Maher, 1991) with dynamic political processes of its own (Said, 1985; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994), have raised a series of conceptual questions around leadership development, particularly relating to the socio-cultural contexts within which it is deployed as a term. This thesis examines the contemporary practice of leadership development both in its deployment as a catalyst for organisational change and also as a tool for management learning i.e. leadership education (LE).

First, the thesis contributes to understandings of leadership development through the twin framework of LD offered as a non-accredited programme and again, as leadership education (LE) accredited by a university. Within this, I present data from two very significant initiatives;

(a) A global LD programme implemented within an international organisation, and that would significantly impact the lives and thinking of its various members

(b) A LE programme located within a highly prestigious Western-influenced African business school, with significant implications for the society and culture it is happening in.

Second and more specifically, I present detailed analyses of participant experience on these leadership development initiatives through qualitative data analysis, focusing on

- (a) How the programmes are framed through experience in context, particularly how knowledge about leadership and leadership development is constructed in context and
- (b) The implications of the programmes' content as read through a postcolonial theoretical lens or as Fougère and Moulettes (2011) note, with a certain degree of 'postcolonial sensibility' (p.2).

1.2 A tale of three literatures

In order to be able to explore these issues, it is necessary to delve into three specific areas of literature in a considerable measure of detail. This inquiry is thus located at the intersection of 3 major literatures – Leadership Studies, Postcolonial Theory and Leadership Development.

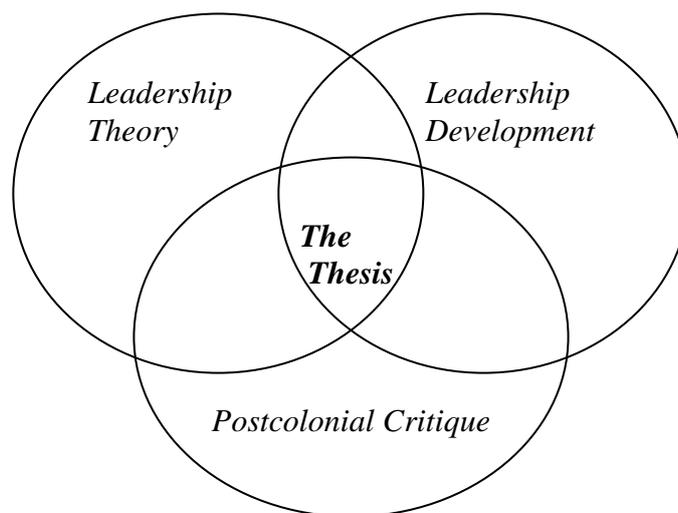


Fig 1.1 – Locating the Inquiry

First, in view of the fact that as many definitions of leadership abound as those who have defined it (Stodgill 1970), it appeared necessary to examine the basis of what seemed to be a theoretical confusion associated with the concept of leadership. It seemed even more critical to explore what this might imply for those whose preoccupation it was to develop leadership in others. As such, in order to grasp a theoretical sense of what the term *leadership* might connote (at least if not ‘universally define’), it was essential to trace the theoretical evolution of this elusive phenomenon, and also to engage with ‘as many definitions’ of this concept as this study could practically allow without losing its strategic research focus. This theoretical journey has necessitated an acquaintance with what is now believed to be the considerably broad body of literature on leadership.

Secondly, it has also been argued that ‘knowledge’ about any given social phenomenon (e.g. leadership) is not only contextual but that the dynamics of its evolution are equally subject to the cultural influences that impinge on a particular context. Scholarly discourses abound in respect of the significance of the imprints of culture on knowledge creation (Prasad, 1997; 2003); the politicisation of knowledge including the imperial legitimation and privileged positioning of certain ‘knowledges’ as mainstream (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988 Bhabha, 1994); and the perceived intellectual ethnocentrism of what has come to be regarded as mainstream knowledge (Smith, 1999; Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi, 2005). These scholars have all argued that far from being universal in its orientation, such mainstream knowledge may be seen as ‘western’ because not only is it a product of a one sided worldview often occasioned by imperialist or colonial lenses, but that it has also been contrived within the socio-political context of unequal power

relations between colonizer and colonized. These scholars argue that this process of knowledge positioning or ‘mainstreaming’ engenders dynamics that are grounded in covert processes of *othering*, of *naming*, and of *worlding* which are indeed reminiscent of the colonial era. To better understand this, I have turned to what is known as the body of literature known as postcolonial critique.

A third consideration is one that has ‘flowed’ logically from the first two. Given the outline above, we come to an important conceptual question that concerns learning to lead, particularly as embodied in contemporary leadership development interventions today. In engaging with the *leadership* literature and in considering its theoretical dilemma –in particular the observation that there is not a ‘universal’ definition of the concept - it appeared that there were implications for leadership development. If there is a theoretical elusiveness associated with this phenomenon, I wondered what this implied for a ‘practical’ development of the same. Furthermore, taking into account the notions of knowledge-in-context, knowledge politics and intellectual ethnocentrism coupled with the observation that the major acclaimed theories of *leadership* seemed to primarily originate from one part of the world – the western hemisphere (particularly Europe and North America) - what and whose knowledge about leadership was presently being ‘developed’ in contemporary practice? These questions not only necessitated further engagement with the literature on leadership development, but they also threw up further practical questions about the practice of leadership development in a context outside of ‘the west’ such as Africa, and in particular my native country of Nigeria.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

This research has mainly ‘flowed’ from my interaction with the three literatures cited above. In what follows, I unpack and explore the more important conceptual concerns encountered during the course of my research process, most of which carry important implications for the way contemporary LD is practiced and experienced within the context of a non-western society. This is in view of what may be considered ‘the dilemma of leadership’, and also against the backdrop of knowledge politics as captured in scholarly debates on the knowledge imperialism and intellectual ethnocentrism that are embedded within the processes of knowledge creation.

Given that the theoretical concept of leadership was as definitively inapprehensible as it appeared, it seemed justifiable to query what the ‘development’ of such an elusive concept would entail in contemporary practice? That is, if indeed defining ‘leadership’ was as theoretically confusing as it now seemed, how exactly might such a seemingly elusive phenomenon be practically developed in others? More importantly and as concerns this thesis, if knowledge was indeed contextual, cultural and could be interpreted as westernised and intellectually ethnocentric, then it followed that there were rather crucial questions that centred on the way we conceptualise and develop leadership today. That is, it seemed pertinent to question *what knowledge* about leadership was presently being ‘developed’ in contemporary practice and again, *in what context?* All of these issues posed important theoretical concerns to explore in more detail. Therefore, I argue here that it is critical to examine contemporary leadership development in light of:

- The seeming elusiveness of the theoretical concept of leadership, or what I term ‘the dilemma of *leadership*’
- The politics of knowledge creation, particularly the notion that intellectual ethnocentrism and knowledge imperialism are embedded within the dynamics of knowledge generation
- The practice of leadership development in context, particularly in terms of contextual relevance to the intending user.

In addition to these reasons, this thesis is further prompted by a number of other practical reasons and personal motivations.

A strategic guiding focus of this study concerns my personal history. I am a scholar of African descent and one of the first things I observed in the course of the research process was a striking dearth of literature on the subject of this thesis with regards to Africa. A few notable scholars have further observed that regardless of the vast body of literature on the subject in general, there does not appear to be very much that has been ‘said’ about leadership and management in Africa (Jackson, 2002, 2004; Obiakor, 2004). Rather, much of the discourse appears to have centred on the western hemisphere, has seldom touched ‘the rest of the world’ (Said, 1985, Ozkazanc-Pan, 2008), and this seems to shape global perspectives on leadership. Many studies (Blunt & Jones, 1997; Bolden & Kirk, 2005; Jones, 2006) have linked this situation to the pre-dominance of western scholars in the field of leadership and management, with their views and ideologies mainly informed by dynamics and interactions within the contexts of their own socio-cultural realities; others have cited the inadequacy of western

leadership theories in dealing with what they consider the complex and multi-faceted nature of leadership in non-western societies, against the backdrop of a dense fabric of heterogeneous culture and value systems (Tayeb, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Obiakor, 2004).

Therefore, a key motivation for me has been the attempt to ‘create’ new knowledge and the need to generate fresh insights into the contemporary practice of leadership development in Africa. While I do not delude myself that what I have to say is representative of an entire continent, since this would be tantamount to epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988) not to mention the fallacy of hasty generalisation, I attempt to provide a glimpse into the social and cultural realities of African participants who have been engaged in various forms of leadership development practice. More broadly, I have sought to observe leadership development processes in a broader cultural context with a view to opening and widening the existing discourse, as well as seeking to make my own distinct contribution towards addressing the dearth in literature on leadership development in Africa.

At the moment of commencing this study, leadership development had been studied mainly in the context of large corporate organizations, with many of the fortune 500 companies featuring prominently. It had also been studied extensively in health-care (Guo & Andersen, 2005, Borthwick & Galbally, 2001) but still in the context of large corporate organizations. It had equally been observed in the context of voluntary organizations (Catano et al, 2001, Gold et al, 2004; and Getha-Taylor, 2006). However, with the exception of earlier research

on a Pan-African leadership development initiative (Bolden and Kirk, 2005), there seemed little else as regards the subject of leadership development in Africa, nor could I find anything on contemporary leadership development practice in Nigeria. Regular searches of various databases and on-line resources surfaced little regarding the leadership development in Africa or in relation to African social or cultural contexts. My search included such keywords as *leadership*, *leadership development*, *leadership development in Nigeria*, *leadership development in Africa*, *leadership development and cross-cultural*, and yet I was unable to find substantial literature that dealt specifically with the subject matter, even within a cross-cultural context.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

From this, the main objective of this research developed into the aim to conduct an in-depth investigation into the contemporary practice of leadership development as it is deployed and experienced in the context of ‘non-western’ socio-cultural realities – first, as a catalyst for organisational change and second, as a management learning intervention. For the purpose of this research, I have conducted this inquiry within a framework of two case studies. The first is a gendered non-profit organisation which for reasons of confidentiality is herein anonymised as ‘YouthOrg’ and which afforded me the opportunity to examine an LD intervention employed as a catalyst for organisational change. The second case study is that of the Lagos Business School (LBS), a reputable and highly respected Nigerian higher education institution, renowned for its management learning and teaching excellence and listed on the Financial Times Global Executive MBA rankings. In this context I have been privileged to explore

participant engagement with leadership development as a means of management education. Overall, I have sought to explore the realities, the learning experiences and social constructions of non-western participants enrolled on these two contemporary leadership development programmes. The overarching aim is to understand the dynamics, processes and challenges that are associated with developing leadership within participants from non-western societies. In more detail, this thesis thus aims:

- To examine the practice of leadership development in a non-western context, and to be able to establish exactly ‘what’ was being developed in this setting. That is ‘what leadership’ was being developed in practice within the understudied context? What voices ‘spoke’ to it and what/whose paradigms framed it?
- To explore the learning experiences of leadership development in the context of participants from Africa. That is, to ‘see’ the programme/s as participants saw, with a view to determining what ‘contextual sense’ it made to these intending users. For instance, were there any elements from the programme that might resonate with participant experience?
- To apprehend participant experience and social constructions of leadership development. This is to identify what understandings of leadership/leadership development it was that participants constructed for themselves both on the programme and also in the context of everyday life. (i.e. in the daily lived context of their socio-cultural reality) and how these ‘fit’ together.

- To provide fresh insights into contemporary practice of leadership development in Africa, particularly Nigeria, and possibly, to unearth hidden wisdoms or any implicit patterns of knowledge or practice wherever they might exist
- To contribute to existing knowledge and to broaden the discourse on the practice of leadership development in Africa.
- To contribute towards addressing the issue of ‘dearth’ of literature on leadership development in Africa.

These objectives have been developed with a view to establishing in practice, whether (or not) there might be contextual dissonance identifiable within the contemporary management practice of developing leadership capacity, in the context of this study. That is, if indeed LD should make contextual sense to the intending user, this thesis would uncover whether or not this was the case with contemporary LD practice in the context understudied, and again, given the claims of intellectual ethnocentrism, the knowledge positioning that this would have therein. It is hoped that the outcome of this might serve as a relevant contribution to current discourse and also as part of a framework for the future development of LD practice in Africa and in particular, Nigeria.

1.5 Research Questions

Below is a summary of the research questions as they pertain to each case study. The first case (YouthOrg) is more of an introductory study that ‘sets the stage’ and provides the basis for further inquiry into case study two (LBS).

1.5.1 YouthOrg

YouthOrg is a values-based, cross-cultural, inter-generational, voluntary organization for girls and young women. In 2007 the organization embarked on a leadership development programme with the intention to roll it out across its over 185 member organizations (MOs) throughout the world. This would be achieved through a number of specific learning events held in selected regions which would draw carefully selected participants from the various MOs. It is hoped that the YouthOrg Leadership Development Programme (YLDP) would not only serve to build leadership capacity in its young women, but that it would subsequently emerge as a benchmark for other leadership development programmes in future. In the light of these aspirations, I developed a number of relevant questions and potential challenges before starting the fieldwork:

- I. YouthOrg is a values-based organization, with fundamental values centred on non-formal education and intergenerational, cross-cultural relationships. How appropriately would the proposed leadership development programme 'fit' with these values which the organisation presently espoused e.g. *cross-cultural*?

- II. How 'universally applicable' is this developmental initiative as it is being rolled out before different countries, societies, and cultures; that is, does it give due consideration to questions of diversity and is there or not a danger of intellectual imperialism? If so, what are the implications for the design and implementation of the initiative, and for the organisation's own aims, given its values-base

- III. What are the challenges and complexities that might arise as the programme is being rolled out worldwide; that is, what kinds of responses and feedback would the programme engender? Would participants respond with acceptance, rejection, or withdrawal, for example?
- IV. How effective would this programme seem to be in developing leadership capacity within the organization, particularly among participants from the Africa region?

1.5.2 Lagos Business School (LBS)

The Lagos Business School was set to provide high quality general management education tailored to the Nigerian business environment for executives. The School delivers executive programmes at top and middle management levels that are geared towards a systematic improvement of management practice in Nigeria. The school offers a range of open-enrolment business and management seminars for business leaders and managers, as well as bespoke in-house seminars and workshops for organisations with larger staff groups. LBS programmes are considered successful, attracting over 2,000 participants from multinational and indigenous companies yearly. This case study was conducted within the LBS Campus in Lagos, Nigeria with the MBA Class of 2008 – 2010 over the course of its *Leadership Development* module, and it would seek answers to the following questions developed prior to the second case study fieldwork:

- I. What exactly was being taught on this leadership course and how did participants engage with this in the learning space/class?

- II. What were participants' constructions of leadership from the engagement with this module? That is, what did participants make of what they were taught? How did they respond to the ideas discussed on the module? That is, did they accept, reject, or adapt it? Or like in the other case, did they withdraw?

- III. What were their experiences of leadership in their lived context? That is, what did their experiential accounts of 'leading' or 'being led' focus on; and what were their expectations?

- IV. How did (II) fit with (III)? That is;
 - a) *If the taught ideas were accepted and considered relevant, did this reflect in their lived experiences and expectations of leadership, or not?*
 - b) *If they were rejected, were the rejected notions at variance with their lived experiences of leadership, or not?*
 - c) *If there was withdrawal, what did this mean?*
 - d) *If the reactions were all or none of the above, again, what could be made of this?*

All of the above are important questions that I have sought answers to during the fieldwork process.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

Below is an outline of the thesis with a brief summary of the contents of each chapter;

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that provides a broad overview of the research. This includes the research background, rationale for the study, as well as the specific aims and objectives of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is a theoretical review that encompasses the three literary domains of leadership, postcolonial critique and leadership development. It provides a conceptualisation of leadership in extant literature, a review of postcolonial critique, and a critical review of leadership development in theory and practice. Because the field of leadership is exceptionally broad, I have in this section attempted to trace the conceptualisation of ‘leadership’ in the extant literature. Secondly, I explore the relevant debates from the body of postcolonial critique that are deemed pivotal to this research, and I present these as a sound theoretical framework on which to ‘hang’ the empirical aspect of this thesis. Lastly, this chapter explores the discourse around leadership development and pays particular attention to how this is linked with practice, and more specifically, what it means ‘in context’.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological considerations employed during the study including a justification of research paradigm, the researcher’s philosophical positioning and rationale for the preferred research methods of data collection and analysis. This explains the methodological framework that has informed and shaped the research process. In this chapter, I strive to maintain a postcolonial consciousness by positioning my research as a purely qualitative case study with

phenomenological underpinnings. In this, I also describe the process of data collection and conclude with a discussion of data analysis methods

Chapter 4 explores the case of YouthOrg and the process of its 'leadership development in young volunteering women'. A detailed background of the organisation is presented, as well as the circumstances that have led to the development of this organisational learning intervention and thereafter. In this chapter, I present a pedagogical critique of the intervention with a focus on structure, delivery and content, as well as learning effectiveness in view of participants' responses to the programme. I also advance a critical analysis of leadership development within the organisation as read through a postcolonial lens, particularly in light of what this means for its positioning and values-base. Finally, this chapter discusses the main findings from this case in view of the overall theoretical framework and furthermore, as a build-up to the next case study.

In Chapter 5, I critically examine the processes and challenges associated with Leadership Development practice in corporate Nigeria through the case study of the Lagos Business School. In this, I explore the knowledge and understanding that participants construct for themselves as they engage with content on the programme; in addition to their own 'lived' contextual experiences of leadership, and I examine these experiential frameworks in light of the knowledge that is constructed on this programme. Furthermore, I consider issues of contextual dissonance between western functionalist paradigms of management development as advanced on the programme and the lived socio-cultural realities within a non-

western society as this one. In this, I investigate theoretical claims that underscore the notion of contextual un-alignment between western knowledge and the reality of African societies, i.e. non-western contexts. For analytical purposes and also to properly contextualise this study, this chapter traces the evolution of colonial education in Nigeria up till the present day and offers a detailed background of the school. In addition, the main findings from this case are also discussed as they relate to the first case study and as an introduction to the discussion that follows.

Following the analyses of case findings in chapter 4 and 5, Chapter 6 presents a discussion of both cases. It advances a praxis contribution to leadership development in Africa in the form of a model. In this, I present various practical options informed by my conceptual analysis, as well as an analytical examination of each option developed. Lastly, I discuss the option of internationalisation as a practical consideration.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter of this thesis and reviews the main findings of the research, as well as its empirical and praxis contributions to knowledge. It highlights the implications for future theory and practice, the limitations to the study, and finally, lays the basis for a future research agenda.

CHAPTER TWO

A THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Background

A key theoretical aspect of this study is located within the body of postcolonial critique. The thesis draws primary focus from scholarly debates that have centred on intellectual ethnocentrism and knowledge imperialism in respect of how the world is *seen, known* and *represented*. It examines the relevant aspects of the postcolonial debate such as the discourses of *worlding, othering*, and highlights important theoretical and conceptual issues regarding the politics of knowledge creation and representation. At the root of this position lies the social constructionist view, that is, the fundamental epistemological argument that we ‘see’ and ‘know’ about our social world from a situated perspective or point of view. Therefore, our knowledge about the world is believed to be socially constructed within the context of the socio-cultural spaces that we, as social actors, inhabit. This is because knowledge about ‘our world’ is basically derived from our experiences of that world, and these experiences are shaped by the context that we inhabit, and go on to become our frames of reference as regards the world (Goffman, 1986).

This section thus presents postcolonial analyses that challenge what is seen as the universalising tendency of western knowledge and the undue privileging of this as mainstream, particularly in the context of non western societies, e.g. Africa. It advances various theoretical positions which suggest that contemporary systems of formal learning are an extension of a regime of knowledge imperialism,

previously imposed by colonial power and authority; which up till the present day, might have remained perpetuated via the instrumentality of formal education and its contingent ideological frameworks.

Against the backdrop of this critique, the postcolonial lens is brought to bear on the discourses of leadership and leadership development; which are also part and parcel of mainstream knowledge. A conceptual background of the leadership debate is subsequently presented and in this, it is observed that though seemingly over-theorized, *leadership* as a theoretical concept has remained elusive, and the key theoretical perspectives that have informed this debate seem to have mostly originated from a specific part of the world – the Anglo-speaking West, particularly USA and the UK (which for the sake of argument, have been termed ‘the West’). This is not unrelated to the fact that the term ‘leadership’ is believed to be a mostly Anglo-American concept which has also been linked to earlier representations of the rugged individual mythical hero of the Native American frontier (See Prasad 1997) and this is discussed in subsequent paragraphs. It is also observed that such theoretical discourses appear to have marginalized certain other parts of the world, particularly, Africa, and in order to sufficiently unpack and explore this, I have drawn on the postcolonial argument of *othering*.

Having examined this, I advance the argument that it is possible that mainstream leadership knowledge, particularly the contemporary practice of leadership development as we know it, might be contextually dissonant with many parts of Africa today. I argue that the question of contextual dissonance is an important one that carries significant implications for the way in which we conceptualise

leadership and more so, for how we engage with the practice of contemporary leadership development. I also suggest that just as what we claim to know about leadership is contextual and as such, mirrors the cultural elements from within that context; there is a danger that leadership development interventions based on such contextually defined knowledge frameworks might themselves be culturally unaligned with other contexts, if adopted uncritically. A primary concern is with respect to the construction of *meaning* and *identity*. Some scholars argue convincingly that contemporary leadership development programmes provide and enable a space for the construction of identity, and I briefly consider the concepts of *shifting and competing identities* (Alvesson et al, 2008) and *usurpation of space* (Höpfl, 2000) to sufficiently unpack this idea and explore its relevance to my research.

In light of the above, questions of knowledge ethnocentrism, cultural alignment and contextual dissonance with respect to the contemporary practice of leadership development; as well as the indigenous African leadership theory of *Ubuntu* are considered.

2.2 Knowledge and Context

The way in which we ‘see’ and ‘know’ our world, particularly the means by which we conceptualise knowledge about humans and the social space they inhabit, is a matter of intense debate with significant practical implications. Human beings are said to be social actors, entrenched in social reality, within which they must perceive, act, interact and make meaning. These perceptions, interpretations and interactions are not always static and isolated, but they are themselves dynamic, interwoven, often recurring and constantly being

(re)negotiated. It has been argued that environment and context are two important elements that invariably shape our appropriation or understanding of any phenomenon. *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1986) demonstrated the importance of the above and how these impacted on our constructions of 'meaning'. Goffman argued that our understanding of a phenomenon is considerably influenced by our mental programs, values and beliefs, and as such, our knowledge and understanding of 'a thing' is significantly impacted and shaped by our thought processes, our interactions, and our experiences in social reality; all working to reinforce each other. This is because our thought processes fundamentally inform our interactions with one another, and such dynamic interactions together with our perceptions and interpretations of them, are what may then provide the basis for our experiences. It is believed that these experiences are what go on to shape our expectations and subsequently, form the *frames* for our terms of reference. Frames therefore, are value-laden rhetorical resources which act as a gestalt for viewing ongoing circumstances; as a platform for the management of perceptions, interpretation, and meaning; and finally, as a basis for judging and understanding events as they unfold through space and in time (Goffman, 1986; Hamilton & Bean, 2005).

In light of this, the concept of *context* has been defined as a given social reality, made up of different sets of *competing frames* from which individuals must draw resources for sense-making (Hamilton & Bean, 2005) and it has been suggested that people are entrenched in different realities or contexts (Hearn & Ninan, 2003). These different realities, made up of distinct and varying *sets of frames*, are more or less socially contextual spaces within which people must constantly enact

their unique behaviours and dynamic interactions. It is these consistently re-enacted frames and interactions within an increasingly complex social reality that collectively account for situational variation and subsequently, contextual uniqueness from one socio-cultural reality to the other.

As such, we see that the notion of *context* rests on a taken-for-granted assumption of distinctiveness, variation, and in many cases, uniqueness. Furthermore, we also understand that our construction of the *meaning* of a thing is fundamentally derived from the rhetorical resources within our own unique and distinct context; and these resources are themselves, value laden. Therefore, our *knowledge* of a thing is not only contextually constructed, but is equally value-laden, because it has been generated in a value-laden social space or context.

2.3 Knowledge as Culturally Contingent

If *knowledge* can be said to be contextual, then it can also be conceptualised as being culturally contingent. This is because although contexts are essentially value laden social spaces from which social actors must draw rhetoric for the construction of meaning and sense-making, *values* are themselves advanced as a crucial dynamic of culture. Indeed, Hofstede observed that our values are fundamentally informed by our mental programs, belief-systems and norms, all of which are cultural elements that form the basis for and shape cultural patterns of behaviour, over a period of time (Hofstede, 1980). House et al (2004) equally defined *Culture* as being ‘shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations’. However, because such ‘collectives’ exist in social space within which all of the

above (i.e. values, beliefs, motives, meanings, etc.) must interplay, one may conclude that all of the above are major cultural forces that significantly impinge on any given social context or what I have preferred to term ‘socio-cultural enclosures’.

This therefore suggests that the concept of culture – as a composition of shared beliefs, values, identities and meanings - significantly influences our perceptions, interpretations and comprehension of a thing and as such, plays a critical role in the way we conceptualise and generate our knowledge about any given social phenomenon.

Haarmann (2007) further observed that knowledge construction is basically a cognitive and interactive process which does not occur in a vacuum, but rather through the dynamic inter-play of cultural belief systems and world views. He argues that cultural worldviews or shared frameworks of symbolism, perception and meaning will ultimately impact how knowledge about the world is generated. In his words, ‘there is no knowledge construction without the “umbrella” of a worldview’ (p.118). Thus, we may argue that what we lay claim to as our ‘knowledge’ about a given social phenomenon is not necessarily an absolute, objective or universal one, but indeed a more subjective or culturally contingent one. This is because it has been narrowly conceptualised within an ‘umbrella’ of a worldview, that is, within a culturally bounded sphere of meaning. Therefore, it can be argued that such knowledge is culturally contingent mainly because it has been subjectively and contextually defined, and as such cannot be entirely divorced from the influence of the cultural forces that impinge upon that context. This in turn suggests that our knowledge about any given social phenomena is not

in itself absolute or contextually independent, but rather is subject to the dynamics of culture, time and the social reality within which it is constructed; and indeed ‘what we look upon as a “body of knowledge” is actually something that is constructed in a social and historical context (Torkington, 1996; p.15).

In view of this, the term *cross-cultural* may subsequently be used to refer to cultural inter-activity (Smith, 1956). That is, interactions and activities that cut across cultural lines (Thomas, 2008). The Collins English Dictionary describes cross-cultural as that which is ‘involving and bridging across two or more cultures’. Therefore, this would include any activities that encompasses or cuts across more than one culture.

2.4 Leadership and ‘what we know’ – Conceptualisation in Extant Literature

The above argument thus poses very important questions for the present understanding of *leadership*, particularly how we come to *know* or conceptualise its meaning, and also what we advance as knowledge. First, it is important to consider what is known about the concept of leadership, and how this existing knowledge of it may have come to be. I argue that this equally carries significant implications for how we conceptualise and engage with the practice of leadership development.

Therefore, this section examines key theoretical discourses within leadership theory. In this I present a picture of what has generally come to be recognised as the *dilemma of leadership*; that is, its seeming inability to apprehend a single overarching meaning, even within the mainstream body of knowledge. I also argue

that regardless of what appears a theoretical confusion within this field, much of the leadership debate has raged primarily within a particular geographical and intellectual domain. I advance possible reasons for this and proceed to discuss them in some detail. Next, I consider how a social constructionist understanding of leadership might not only provide answers to resolving its seeming theoretical dilemma, but more importantly, how it may provide a useful theoretical framework for the recognition, understanding and acknowledgement of a plurality of ‘knowledges’ in the domain of management learning and leadership development.

From various studies spanning different periods, we see that leadership as a researchable phenomenon has been studied from various perspectives. Some of these can be traced back to earlier classical approaches of Plato’s ‘Philosopher King’ and Machiavelli’s ‘Prince’ which preceded later perspectives such as the ‘Great Man’ and Trait theories. Subsequent schools of thought included the Skills/Competencies approach (Katz, 1955), the Behavioural School (McGregor, 1960; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958) and the Situational Model of leadership (Hersey & Blanchard; 1969, 1977, 1988; Fiedler; 1987; Adair, 1983). There were also the Charismatic (House, 1977; Conger & Kanungo; 1987) and Transformational Models (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), as well as Servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970). More recent views have included the Influence/Relationship (Yukl, 2002; Northouse, 2004) and Distributed Leadership theories (Bennett et al., 2003).

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 organisation (Yukl, 2002). Others have equally emphasised the role of *relationships* within the dynamics of social interactions (Day, 2000; Drath, 1998) and view leadership as ‘a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal’ (Northouse, 2004; p.3)

A further conceptualization has been with respect to how leadership differs from management (Kotter, 1990). In this view, while leadership was explained as being strategically equipped to cope with change and the contingent ability to navigate this, Management was viewed as an affair that dealt fundamentally with the organisation of complexity. A significant aspect of this view was that business leadership failures were largely attributed to a failure to adapt to changing circumstances (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Till the present day, the concept of leadership remains a vehemently contested one, and scholarly debates about its phenomenal essence have over time assumed an increasingly speculative dimension (Yukl, 2002).

2.5 Mapping Leadership Perspectives

The seemingly enduring ambiguity surrounding leadership is best captured by Stodgill (1974) who described it as a ‘rather complicated notion’ (p.2). In observing that there were as many definitions of leadership as there were persons who had attempted to define this concept, he embarked on a survey of major

leadership approaches, from which he identified ten major categories. These broadly classified leadership as:

- A focus of group processes (i.e. in terms of *centre* and the *surround*)
- Personality and its Effects (i.e. trait, dominance, exceptionality)
- The art of inducing compliance (i.e. social control)
- The exercise of influence (i.e. increasingly shaping force or psycho-socially formative energy, often with an element of reciprocity)
- Act or Behaviour (i.e. action provoking response and vice versa)
- Form of Persuasion (i.e. more inspiration than coercion)
- Power Relation (i.e. interfering influence, usually non-reciprocal)
- An instrument of Goal Achievement (i.e. task-oriented and target-driven)
- An effect of interaction
- A Differentiated Role (i.e. position with functions/duties or responsibilities)
- The Initiation of Structure (i.e. categorisation and stratification)

In summary, he concluded that there was very little scholarly agreement in terms of the various definitions and conceptualizations, and particularly noted that there was a clear absence of a unifying theory of leadership.

Similarly, in his scholarly review of the theoretical landscape, Yukl (2006) identified five major approaches to leadership research, namely:

- The *Trait* Approach – which emphasized ‘natural’ attributes of a leader, and how leaders are born and not made
- The *Behaviour* Approach – which sought to determine what could be considered as effective leadership behaviour
- The *Power-Influence* Approach – which attempted to explain the dynamics of influence and power relationships as a function or catalyst of effective leadership
- The *Situational* Approach – which stressed the importance of situational variables and contingent factors that impact leadership
- The *Integrative* Approach – which primarily seeks to include more than one type of leadership approach in a single study e.g. may include the trait and power-influence variables

Yukl (2006) also observed that researchers had often defined leadership according to their own contextual perspectives and in line with the aspects of the phenomenon that most interested them. Furthermore, he attributed the seemingly jumbled state of the field to the narrow focus of most researchers, disparity of approaches, and the lack of broad theoretical frameworks that could possibly integrate all of the various findings from different research studies.

‘Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organisation. The numerous definitions of leadership that have been proposed appear to have little else in common... The differences are not just a case of scholarly nit-picking. They reflect deep disagreements

about identification of leaders and leadership processes. Researchers who differ in their conception of leadership select different phenomena to investigate and interpret the results in different ways. When leadership is defined in a very restrictive way by researchers, they are likely to take a narrower perspective on the processes to be studied, and it is less likely they will discover things unrelated to, or inconsistent with their initial assumptions about effective leadership. (Yukl, 2006, p. 3)

In an earlier review, Yukl (2002) articulates a dichotomy of leadership in the light of its being both a *specialised role* and a *shared influence*. On the one hand, the former presents an understanding of leadership as a defined role that is played within a group, and which carries with it certain functions and responsibilities that ordinarily cannot be performed outside of this role, so as not to jeopardise or hamper group effectiveness. In this, there are clearly delineated and defined roles occupied by *leader/s* and *followers*, who are each expected to perform specified functions or undertake certain responsibilities at any given time. As such, researchers who adopt this view would be more concerned about leader attributes and behaviours, as well as measurements or determinants of leadership effectiveness. On the other hand, the conceptualization of leadership as ‘shared influence’ is synonymous with its representation as an influence process; in this, the process of leadership occurs naturally within social reality and is diffused among the social actors who inhabit and interact within that social system. In this instance, there is no clear distinction between leaders and followers and any member of the group may exhibit leadership at any point in time. Proponents of this approach might thus prefer to study leadership as a social process, and are

more likely interested in the complex processes of interaction that occur, as well as the situational or contextual factors that might shape such interactions.

Furthermore, in his subsequent review, Northouse (2004) identified a cluster of themes or commonalities that appeared to run through the majority of leadership theories. He summarized that:

- Leadership is a *process*
- Leadership involves *influence*.
- Leadership occurs in *groups*
- Leadership includes attention to *goals*.

In this, the explanation is that leadership is neither a trait nor quality to be possessed, but rather it is a *process of influence* that is both interactive and transactional in nature. That is, it is not a linear or one-way event, but one which incorporates dual or multi-level communication as well as other elements of dynamic social exchange which often occur in the context of a group. In this group, members are usually working together towards a common objective/s, and the leader is seen to exert a measure of influence on followers. He further observed that ‘influence is the *sine qua non* of leadership’ and that ‘without influence, leadership does not exist’. (p. 3) From this perspective, leadership is advanced as a process of *relationship* (that is, dynamic interactions and social exchange) and *influence*, which occurs within a group of people (leader and followers) who are working together towards achieving a set goal/s.

In his own review, Grint (2005) further affirmed the elusive nature of this concept when he stated that ‘leadership research appears to be anything but incremental in its approach to *the truth* about leadership; the longer we spend looking at leadership, the more complex the picture becomes’ (p.15). For Grint leadership fell into one of two broad categories, which he termed ‘essentialist’ and ‘non-essentialist’ respectively. He recalled that in an earlier attempt to reproduce desirable qualities of the ‘ideal’ leader, he realised the futility of his efforts when he had arrived at 127 ‘necessary aspects of leadership’. A further attempt to list leadership categories in the order of their bi-polar relationships – e.g. management vs. leadership, transactional vs. transformational, task-oriented vs. people-oriented, etc. proved to be equally as exasperating, managing only to produce an infinite list of binary opposites. Nevertheless, it appears that his solution to this dilemma may still be seen in his binary categorization of leadership theories as *essentialist* and *non-essentialist*. In this, he presented 4 broadly classified leadership perspectives of *Trait*, *Situational*, *Contingency*, and *Constitutive* which he proceeded to place along a two-dimensional continuum of essentialist and non-essentialist classes, explaining that:

‘In this instance, **the term ‘essentialist’ implies that we can acquire a definitive/objective account of the phenomenon under investigation; the term ‘non-essentialist’ implies this is not possible**’. In the trait approach, the essence of the individual leader is critical, but the context is not. In short, a leader is a leader under any circumstances...However, since – in this approach – you cannot ‘make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear’, there is no hope for those of us not born with certain gifts or talents for leadership. In the *Contingency* approach, both the individual and the context are knowable and critical...

Self-awareness and situational analysis are the two developmental areas for such approaches to concentrate upon' (p. 15, emphases mine)

Therefore, as long as we are able to obtain definitive knowledge about a phenomenon under study, it is said to be essentialist, because it is knowable and determinable. However, in a situation where we are not able to generate objective/definite knowledge about that phenomenon, it is believed to be non-essentialist, because it is not definitively knowable. For instance, in considering the trait approach, we see that we are more preoccupied with knowing about the leader's individual traits, than we are about the context in which they operate, and so, provided we are able to select a leader with the 'right' leadership traits, we are guaranteed a smooth sail, regardless of the circumstances or environment in which we find ourselves, i.e. a leader is a leader under any circumstances. Thus, the trait approach is deemed essentialist with respect to the person, but is non-essentialist as regards the context. But as we know, proponents of this theory have failed to produce a definitive list of traits that should make a leader. On the other hand, the *Contingency* approach is classified as essentialist in terms of both person and context because these two variables are considered critical and determinable and as such, are both open to development. Therefore, as much as it reflects the illusory nature of the leadership phenomenon, Grint's constitutive analysis further provides a far more extended perspective of leadership as a social construct, than of it as an apprehensible generalizable 'truth', and this is discussed in the following section.

2.6 Leadership *'in the eye of the beholder'* – towards a Social Constructionist View

The general tenet within social constructionism is that reality is not objective or given, but is socially constructed (Sandberg, 2001) and in this view, leadership is therefore a social construct which involves complex interactions among leaders, followers and situations (Hollander and Julian, 1969; Hamilton and Bean, 2005).

Northouse (2004) may have earlier subtly mirrored this perspective when he stated that leadership

‘...is much like the words *democracy*, *love* and *peace*. Although each of us intuitively knows what he or she means by speaking such words, the words can have different meanings for different people. As soon as we try to define leadership, we immediately discover that leadership has many different meanings.’ (p. 2) (Emphases, mine)

However, a more radical approach was advanced by Billsberry (2009) who argued that leadership as a quality of individual leaders, does not exist. He contended that after decades of leadership research, the discovery of any universal ‘truths’ or ‘definitions’ had remained unattainable and argued that this was so because leadership does and will continue to reside in ‘the eye of the beholder’ much like love or beauty. He posited that he was not a *leadership agnostic* in the sense of anticipating conversion, but more a *leadership atheist* who viewed leadership as merely a title or quality that we incidentally confer on certain people who have done what we think or believe to be leadership.

‘The problem with leadership research is that we have spent all our time studying leaders hoping to establish universal truths about what they do, their characteristics, and how situations influence them. But after thousands of years of research, these universal truths remain elusive. My explanation is that leadership does not exist in the sense that it is a quality of individual leaders. I do not believe that there are any universal truths about what leaders do, their characteristics, or how they are influenced by events. Instead, I see leadership more like beauty; that is, it resides in the eye of the beholder. Just as every person assesses art, literature, films and performances differently and according to their own values, I believe that leadership is simply an epithet that we confer upon people whom we believe to have done things that we regard as ‘leadership’. Everyone is different and has different experiences, so everyone has subtly different assessments of leadership. No wonder that we cannot agree on who is a leader and who is not.’ (p.2)

What the above thus implies is that since it is indeed a social phenomenon, any claims to ‘truth’ about leadership should not be viewed as absolute, universal or generalizable, but rather as something that is constantly enacted and constructed in and through the dynamics, actions and interactions of social actors within the context of the socio-cultural reality that they inhabit. In some quarters, it is believed that followers, not the leader – and definitely not researchers – are those who actually define it (Meindl, 1995).

This view has also been classified as *constitutive leadership* (Grint, 1997, 2000; Grint & Woolgar, 1997). In this, the authors rejected the concept of ‘essences’ altogether and rather advanced a social constructionist view of leadership. This perspective not only challenges the idea of the existence of an objective account of leadership, but prefers instead to locate its understanding in the fact that all

accounts of leadership are derived from linguistic re-constructions of experience. It is believed that these are not merely transparent reproductions of truth, but are more or less subjective interpretive replications of transient or recurring events. Proponents of this view hold that all of such linguistic reconstructions are not necessarily equal, but may have indeed secured linguistic and cognitive dominance because they are the products of more 'powerful' voices. Therefore, even though all linguistically reproduced accounts of leadership are equal, the Orwellian rule (1945) may herein apply, in which some voices are more equal than others (Grint, 1997). It is believed that such vocal dominance is what may have given premise to 'popular' notions of leadership and as such, leadership is thus contingent on the power of persuasive accounts far more than it is on objective, measured, or rational analysis. Nevertheless, there is a note of caution;

'The consequence of this approach is to return us back to the beginning of the debate. It suggests that leadership is essentially interwoven with acts of persuasion; it does not offer a definitive account on the ethical aspects of leadership; indeed, it denies the plausibility of any account that deems itself to be definitive... It suggests we concentrate on not just what leaders do or what the situation is, but on the formative issues that lie behind this phenomena: how do we know what a leader does, and how are we persuaded that a situation is X and that a leader should do Y in such a situation? Finally, let me reaffirm that this does not mean that leadership is whatever anyone wants it to be; it is what certain powerful 'voices' make it. All voices may be equal, but some are more equal than others... it is not that leaders are those who identify the wave and ride it; rather, leaders are those that persuade us a wave is coming, who go out of their ways to appear the most visible surfers to onlookers, and whose actions are taken by the onlookers as actions appropriate for leaders to take' (Grint, 1997; p. 23)

Furthermore, in his argument for a social constructionist view of the leader-follower relationship, Meindl (1995) acknowledges the importance of an emergent theory of leadership in this regard, which he suggests should first be recognised as subjective in nature. He observes that the understanding of leadership as an emergent phenomenon is central to this social constructionist view; in this, leadership is said to emerge when followers construct their own experiences of leader-follower interactions, processes or relationship.

‘...leadership is assumed to be revealed not in the actions or exertions of the leader but as part of the way actors experience organisational processes... The point is that much of the trouble with conventional leadership research is attributable to the conceptual difficulties encountered when theorists and research scientists attempt to impose outside, objective, third-party definitions of what is inherently subjective’. (p. 331)

Again, Hunt and Yan (2005) express leadership as a product or consequence of the various processes of cognition through which people label others. This would encompass the totality of behaviour, competencies, results, etc. that are continually generated by leaders in and through the leadership process, as these elements are interpreted by those involved in the process.

Leadership... is an outcome of the social cognitive processes that people use to label others. It involves the behaviours, traits, characteristics and outcomes produced by leaders as these elements are interpreted by followers. Here, effective leadership depends not only on the adequate administration of rewards and technical abilities of a leader, but also on

how the leader's subordinates, peers, or even superiors interpret these actions. (p. 50)

In light of the above, it follows that our understanding or conceptualizations of leadership will more often than not, arise from our contextual constructions and subjective interpretations of social reality; leadership is thus a process of reality construction that is grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982).

Furthermore, Lord and Maher (1991) also assert that leadership is the process of being perceived by others as a leader, and that this perception varies with different cultural dimensions. The leadership relationship exposes the values and beliefs of both leaders and followers (Northouse, 2004). In other words, against the backdrop of varying cultures, 'leadership means different things to different people' (Gill, 2006; p.7) and it should therefore be studied in the context of how it is perceived by those involved in leading and in being led. In this sense, leadership as a social phenomenon is better understood within the context in which it occurs, and also in terms of the 'sense' or 'meaning' that is drawn from it because among other things, it is a cultural contingent (House, 2004: p.5).

According to this school of thought, key notions of leadership would essentially be a function of *experiential perception* (Lord and Maher, 1991), of *meaning construction* (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Meindl, 1995; Hunt and Yan, 2005), and subsequently of *powerful articulation* (Grint, 1997). It appears that such an argument goes straight to the heart of spatial and contextual meaning. This is because from this view, leadership is seen as constantly enacted in social space; and its *meaning* is continuously being contextually constructed and negotiated

based on individual accounts of experience occurring in social reality. If indeed context is thought to vary and if leadership meaning is derived from social constructions in varying contexts, then it follows that leadership is not a fixed constant phenomenon, but a *relative* social variable. This is because its meaning is neither universal nor generalizable, but one which is continually being negotiated and re-negotiated within the boundaries of *space*.

2.7 Leadership – Towards a Cultural Understanding

Consequently, it has been argued that because cultural forces play such a significant role in shaping our constructions of leadership, Leadership should therefore be understood in terms of its cultural composition and its complexity across various culturally bounded spheres of meaning. Thomas et al (1997) have noted that people's perceptions of leaders and leadership behaviour are likely to be influenced by their cultural background and they emphasise the complexity of cross-cultural leadership situations. In their study of leadership in multicultural teams, the authors observed the presence of culturally based differences amongst leadership prototypes held by members of the different ethnic groups studied. They also noted that effective interaction between leaders and followers was considerably affected by the cultural identity of both leader and follower.

In his earlier seminal study, Hofstede (1980) examined the impact of cultural differences on management practice and in this identified four key components of culture – *Power Distance*, *Individualism/Collectivism*, *Masculinity/Femininity* and *Uncertainty Avoidance*. He later expanded this to include a fifth dimension known as *Confucian dynamism* or *Long-term Orientation* (1991), a concept of time-orientation derived from Confucius' ideas; which makes a distinction between

‘positive future-oriented Confucian values’ on the one hand (e.g. *persistence, ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift* and having a *sense of shame*) and ‘negative short-term Confucian values’ (such as *personal steadiness and stability, protecting your face, respect for tradition* and *reciprocation of greetings, favours and gifts*) on the other.

Power distance refers to the degree of inequality among a country’s people that is deemed acceptable within that culture; *Individualism/Collectivism* measures the extent of value that is placed on the individual as against group relations/orientation; *Masculinity/Femininity* has to do with the way in which goal and achievement is perceived and measured within a society and *Uncertainty Avoidance* measures the degree to which a society perceives threat and to which they prepare for uncertainty, i.e. the risk appetite of a people. Hofstede argued that the degree to which these components are present within a given national culture will significantly shape management practice within those societies. Sub-Saharan Africa was grouped into West, East and South, and listed alongside countries such as USA, Germany and Netherlands, and it is noted that in contrast to the standard country listing, Africa was broadly studied on a continental, rather than on a country level. While this connotes a broad sweeping generalisation, it also culturally homogenises an entire sub-region e.g. it presents certain findings as being from ‘West Africa’. What this might imply is that such findings are representative of all countries in that sub-region; for instance, culture (and subsequently, management practice) in Francophone Senegal is exactly the same as in Anglophone Ghana.

Another relevant study that seems to have influenced contemporary thinking on cross-cultural leadership and management is the 2004 GLOBE study (House et al, 2005). In this, the authors argued that the concept of leader-effectiveness is one that is contextually defined and culturally contingent and that this is embedded in the values and beliefs of a given society, with the perceptions, status and influences of leaders varying considerably across cultures. Leadership was therefore studied across 62 countries and building on the Hofstedian analysis, 5 new dimensions of national culture believed were developed. They include;

- *Assertiveness* - The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others
- *Gender-Egalitarianism* – The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.
- *Future Orientation* – The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviours such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future,
- *Humane Orientation* – The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to other
- *Performance Orientation* – The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence

(House et al, 2005)

However, it is noted that as with Hofstede, there also appears a sweeping classification of culture in Africa. In the GLOBE study, findings from five different African countries – namely Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are presented as representative of the entire region of Sub-Saharan

Africa. From both of these studies, Africa, and subsequently leadership and management practice therein, is uniformly characterised by a high uncertainty avoidance culture with a high power distance, and high collectivism.

The above findings are equally not without criticism and notable among these are the views of Nkomo (2008, 2011) and Jackson (2004) who both argue that this approach may be unduly simplistic and broadly generalising of leadership and management in Africa. For instance, Nkomo argues against Hofstede's broad classification of Sub-Saharan Africa and a seeming inability of this study to distinguish between West Africa as a region or country (see Nkomo, 2008). She contends that while arguing for the uniqueness and particularism of national cultures, there is a general tendency in the cross-cultural literature to unduly homogenise Africa and warns against the error of such sweeping categorisations, in which the cultural identity of one country or group of countries is usually presented as representative of the whole. Jackson (2004) in a similar vein suggests that it is inaccurate to portray African management as culturally homogeneous and notes that while it might be easy to say that Africa has a high power distance culture; it is not always that simplistic. For instance, if we are to accept that Africa does have a high power distance culture, then it would follow that an authoritarian style of leadership would be effective within this context. Nevertheless, Jackson again observes that this is not always the case. In his review, he notes that as against the general perception of African leadership and management as uniformly 'despotic' and control oriented – a situation which he argues may be due to a number of reasons including misinterpretation by colonial anthropologists arising possibly from language barriers and a legacy of colonial management systems that

enforced control and compliance rather than consultation; there are indeed various strands of management practice observable in Africa. These range from the post-colonial management systems arising from colonial institutions that were ‘tacked on to African society’ (Jackson 2004, p. 97), the growing influence of post-instrumental management systems due to the growing presence of western multinationals on the continent and lastly, that of the African Renaissance School (see also Nkomo, 2011). In this, he notes that leadership and management in Africa may not be as autocratic and control-oriented as recent studies have portrayed, but that ‘African cultures appear to be far more consensual and democratic than recent observers have led us to believe’ (2004, p.115) and observes that managers in Africa seemed to prefer a more consultative approach.

However, while remarkable and sustained progress appears to have been made towards a greater understanding of the leadership phenomenon, the theoretical confusion that is often associated with apprehending this concept has seemed to persist. It is equally noted that regardless of this confusion, much of the discourse appears to have come from what is presently considered the western developed world – particularly, USA and the UK to the exclusion of other non-western regions. Many scholars contend that despite the existence of other views as to the nature of this social phenomenon, Anglo-western perspectives of leadership not only appear to have dominated the discourse, but have also been positioned as the mainstream body of knowledge such that they have and continue to inform international management education, to the exclusion of the racial ‘other’, be they African or other non- western perspectives (Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi, 2005; Nkomo, 2008). It is argued that this knowledge positioning is ethnocentric because it

appears to privilege certain worldviews over others. That is, despite its being a nebulous and seemingly inapprehensible construct, contemporary discourses of leadership have continued to flow mostly from the USA and the UK and notwithstanding the theoretical confusion therein, these appear to have shaped contemporary management education, to the exclusion of other non-western views (see also Blunt and Jones, 1997; Fougère and Moulettes, 2011).

Therefore, even though there seems at best an enduring ambivalence in apprehending leadership, much of the debate has remained centred on the western, developed world, and rarely touched on the sphere of other non-western cultures or worldviews, and it is this paradigmatic ‘mainstreaming’ that is believed to constitute intellectual ethnocentrism in this case.

Take for instance, some of the key leadership theories such as *transformational leadership* (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), *situational/contingency models* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1977, 1988; Fiedler, 1987; Adair, 1983), *Servant leadership* (Greenleaf, 1970), and more recently, *distributed leadership* (Bennett et al, 2003). It is noticeable that these paradigms have mainly originated from Anglo-American scholars. It is further noted that ‘most modern published notions of leadership have their origins in the West ... propagated far and wide by the Western management education industry, so that any self-respecting MBA holder, say from Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Ecuador or anywhere else, will know broadly the same things about leadership and other aspects of human resource management’ (Blunt and Jones, 1997; p.6). Fougère and Moulettes (2011) further note that regardless of where international management education occurs, much of the literature consists of material from Anglo-American textbooks, ‘which have

become a significant means for the global training of the managerial corps'. (p.3) Citing the need for a shift from what they consider the status quo, the authors advocate 'a much-needed change in the canon of IB/IM education' (p. 17), calling for the publication of more contextualised texts that would mostly draw on 'non-western thinkers in different parts of the world' (p.16). It has also been argued that contemporary management education does indeed bear significant cultural ideological imprints from ancient US society which are not unconnected to conceptualisations of the leader as represented in the *myth of the frontier* (Prasad, 1997), with its narratives of rugged individualism, underwritten by violence, blood and conquest of the savage natives and the establishment of a free society (*more on pp. 76-78*).

Therefore, it is thought that western theories seem to have over time, shaped global perspectives on management and leadership, and the non-western world, despite the richness of its values and cultures, appears to have been *othered* in the global scheme of things (Tayeb, 1991; Obiakor, 2004). While the reasons for this might have remained a matter of intense speculation, I believe it is necessary to examine some critical theoretical perspectives that speak directly to this issue, a core strand that addresses this may be found within the field of Postcolonial Studies

2.8 Knowledge Creation and the Postcolonial Debate

Postcolonial critique as a body of knowledge challenges established ways of *knowing* and attempts a deconstruction of the dominant ways of *seeing* and *understanding* the world. It has been defined as the wide ranging critique of the political-economic conditions, and the ways of thinking, ways of seeing and of

representing the imperialist 'empire' which continue to persist in different degrees, long after the dismantling of the Empire (Brett, 2007). Despite the chronological connotation reflected in the prefix post, postcolonial in this case does not refer merely to descriptions of time or periodic shifts as in 'after-colonial'; rather it implies the adoption of an adverse theoretical stance or opposing position to what has come to be regarded as the 'establishment' in knowledge generation (Radcliffe, 1999) and in this case is inclined to deconstructing colonial forms of thought and patterns of knowing. However, this is not to be confused with 'anti-colonial thought', a perspective that is not just questioning in its approach, to colonialism, but is more associated with social change and opens up philosophical, political and cultural resistance to European colonial rule (Loomba, 2005). Examples include African Nationalism (Senghor, 1964), Pan-Africanism and Negritude (Cesaire, 1972).

Postcolonialism therefore advocates an ontological deconstruction of colonial and colonizing patterns of knowledge, intellectualism and how we 'know' the world; subsequently, it requires an epistemological reconstruction or re-orientation with regards to our perception, acknowledgement and validation of 'truth'.

Postcolonial theorists argue that 'the world' has long been viewed through the one-sided ethnocentric lens of the colonizer, and that this has been to the detriment and subsequent marginalisation of the equally significant worldviews of the colonized. They hold that the production and systematic organisation of western knowledge in its show of ethnocentrism had not only legitimised its privileged positioning as the mainstream, but created an uneven dichotomy in which other forms of knowledge were cast in the periphery. An example of this

can be found in the field of modern medicine, in which western medicine is projected as the first and preferred option, while its non-western counterparts remain sweepingly and broadly classified as ‘alternative’ treatments (Prasad, 2005). Postcolonialism thus attributes what it regards as an imbalanced view of the world, more to reasons of vested economic interests and political control, than to unintentional oversight or ignorant omission.

Although conquest and subjugation was not new, it is noted that what sufficiently differentiated colonialism was the economic, cultural and ideological dimensions to its operations (Prasad, 2003). New lands were not only conquered and their wealth systematically extracted, but the colonies were subsequently linked to the west in complex arrangements of governance, unfair exchange and commercialisation which ensured that these remained economically dependent on the west for sustainability. That is, colonialism not only created structures that facilitated the extraction of wealth from the colonies, but also instituted economic systems which ensured a reliance on the west for the sustenance of economic life within the colonies. It therefore sought to impose western hegemony politically, economically, culturally, as well as ideologically (Prasad, 2003)

Dutton et al (1998) best captured this in stating that:

‘The countries of the West ruled the peoples of the non-western world. Their political dominance had been secured and was underwritten by coercive means - by conquest and in blood. It was further underwritten by narratives of improvement, of the civilizing mission and the white man’s burden, which were secured in systems of knowledge which made sense of

these narratives, and were, in turn, informed and shaped by them...the administration and exploitation of the colonies shaped the West's sense of self, and created new forms and regimes of knowledge. A huge array of data was collected, to enable rule and exploitation; the non-western world was represented in a burgeoning literature and art; and whole new disciplines were born, such as anthropology' (p.7)

According to this view, the colonizer's quest to 'civilize' the other did not only require an understanding of the latter's 'uncivilized' world in order for the former to maintain effective political and economic control, but also enabled the articulation of this civilizing cause in subject narratives. These subject narratives, progressively secured in systems of knowledge, not only presented the colonizer's own culturally tinted view and understanding of the 'uncivilized' and their world, but also helped to highlight the many obstacles to the civilizing mission. They would also seek to explain the reasons for these obstacles, as well as how they could be sufficiently overcome. In this however, the voices of the colonized were not considered necessary to this cause and as such they remained unsolicited. Spivak (1988) observed that the voices of the colonized were as 'dislocated as they are incoherent' (p. 71) and their history and 'ways of being' were subsequently re-inscribed by the pen of the colonizer, who allegedly 'understood' them and, as such, could *represent* and *speak for* them. This view implies that 'the one who represents, must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as an unrestricted government power who protects them and provides them with rain and sunshine' (p. 71); in this case, as one who must bear the burden of protecting them from the pitfalls of remaining uncivilized.

Crucially it is argued that this imperialist narrativization of history (Spivak, 1985) was progressively secured in systems of knowledge which found initial legitimation in regimes of political control and economic materiality, and was subsequently perpetuated through rhetorical means of reiteration. These 'knowledges' are therefore considered the product of a rationalised, instrumentalist and individualist western culture (Dutton et al, 1998).

The same epistemological tension that postcolonial theory embodies is echoed within feminist theory. Feminism as a body of knowledge problematizes gender inequalities and patriarchal ways of being, and it seeks to establish and defend equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities for women. However, a key underlying assumption of this argument is the allusion to homogeneity and 'commonality', with little recognition of contextual complexity (McEwan, 2001). That is, there is a taken-for-granted notion that women all over the world are entrenched in the same social reality, and that they face the same universal issues and challenges of oppression. The parallel lies in the fact that just as postcolonialism challenges the universalizing claims of western knowledge arguably arising from an era of European expansionism; feminism is equally haunted by the disequilibrium between a universalizing common ground and the recognition of difference between women (Ponzanesi, 2007).

Mohanty (1986) suggested that just as the term 'colonization' connotes a relation of structural subjugation and non-recognition of the heterogeneity of the colonized, feminist discourses are equally grounded in the context and dynamics of power relationships, which they either resist or implicitly support. Therefore, it

has been argued that rather than recognize western feminism as a home nation for all women, its proponents must acknowledge the existence of a diversity of perspectives with none unduly privileged as mainstream. As such, critics hold that feminism should repudiate the all-inclusive pedagogical hegemony of western feminism. They recommend that the latter must 'detotalize its feminist identities' and acknowledge the existence of a 'plurality of feminisms', rather than conceive itself as a 'natural political destination' for all women (Ang, 1997; Pringle, 1997). Hill Collins (1990) again observed that some of the views of western feminists have seemed at odds with those of their non-western counterparts. For instance, the women's liberation movement of the 1970s was later criticised and rejected in many parts of the world, particularly by non-western women, whose own traditional family values and experiences were different from their counterparts in the west. Furthermore she noted that 'women of colour have argued that the women's movement has put white, middle-class concerns at its centre and ignored the ideas of women of colour; as such, women of colour have not been full participants in white feminist organisations, despite these organisations' claims that their concerns are universal to all women' (Hill Collins 1990; p.7).

Therefore it is apparent that western colonialism and non-western resistance to it both have important implications for how we 'see' and 'know' the world. Postcolonialism as a body of knowledge thus problematizes and questions the dominant ways through which the world is known, and how this knowledge is defined; spurning what it considers established agendas and radically rejecting accustomed ways of seeing. It contends that these are rooted in colonial perspectives, are ethnocentric and advance a western worldview, to the exclusion

of non-western views. That is, there are intrinsically ethnocentric assumptions underpinning ‘mainstream’ disciplines which are fundamentally unrecognizing of the values and practices of other non-western cultures. This scenario is further illustrated in the following example drawn from fiction. Connell and Gabriel (2010) have suggested that fictional works may be seen as ‘perfectly legitimate social texts that offer powerful, if partial, insights into different social situations’ (p.509) and to sufficiently engage this, below I present an excerpt from Chimamanda Adichie’s (2007) literary masterpiece, *half of a yellow sun*.

In this book, the author projects the radical views of the fiery character *Odenigbo*, a young American-trained anthropologist who at the time, lectures at a University in post-independence Nigeria. The following conversation is between Odenigbo and *Ugwu*, his new house-keeper (or *house-boy*, to use the local term). Odenigbo lives in the sprawling grandeur of the beautiful University town of Nsukka in Eastern Nigeria, while Ugwu, an unlettered teenager from the rural country-side, must quickly adapt to his new environment, as well as to his eccentric, fiercely intelligent young master. For the purpose of clarity, this exchange is edited, and emphases are mine.

‘Lumumba was Prime Minister of Congo. Do you know where Congo is?’

Master asked.

‘No, sah’.

Master got up quickly and went into the study. Ugwu’s confused fear made his eyelids quiver. Would Master send him home because he did not speak English well? ...Master came back with a wide piece of paper that he unfolded and laid out on the dining table, pushing aside books and magazines. He pointed with his pen. ‘This is our world, although *the people who drew this*

map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is no top or bottom, you see.'

Master picked up the paper and folded it, so that one edge touched the other, leaving a hollow between. 'Our world is round, it never ends. *Nee anya* (meaning 'see'), this is all water, the seas and the oceans, and here's Europe and here's our own continent, Africa, and the Congo is in the middle. Farther up here is Nigeria, and Nsukka is here, in the south-east; this is where we are'. He tapped with his pen...

'I will enrol you in the staff primary school,' Master said, still tapping on the piece of paper with his pen.

'Yes, sah,' he said. 'Thank sah.'

'I suppose you will be the oldest in the class, starting in standard three at your age,' Master said. 'And the only way you can get their respect is to be the best. Do you understand?'

'Yes, sah!'

'Sit down, my good man.'

Ugwu chose the chair farthest from Master, awkwardly placing his feet close together. He preferred to stand.

'There are two answers to the things *they* will teach you about our land: *the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books.*' Master stopped to sip his tea. '*They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park.*'

'Yes, sah.' Ugwu wished that this person called Mungo Park had not offended Master so much. (Adichie, 2007; pp. 10-11)

In this conversation, the challenging stance of postcolonial resistance is subtly dramatised by Adichie (2007). First, it is clear that this character *Odenigbo* takes

issue with the map of the world and how it is presented by ‘those who drew it’. As far as he is concerned, they have put ‘their own land’ (i.e. Europe and America) on top, while ‘they have put ours below’ (i.e. Africa), yet in his understanding, since the earth is a sphere, then it follows that ‘there is no top or bottom’. Therefore, in his eyes, it makes little sense to constantly project the map of the world as though there were top or bottom. Nevertheless, it is ‘the people who drew the map’ that have done this, and since it is *they* who drew the map, then it is *their* prerogative to present it as they deem fit, because at the time, they possessed the authority to define and represent the world as they *saw* it (Said, 1978). Secondly, he challenges the historical record of what has come to be intellectually established as Mungo Park’s discovery of the mouth of River Niger, contending that since ‘our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park’s grandfather was born’, then it is unlikely that he alone could have made this landmark discovery.

At this point, thoughts of my early school study of geography come to mind. It is not difficult to recall the pictures from my social studies textbook. My mind vividly re-enacts images of a white male, dressed in smart sailor’s uniform, poised proudly on a newly-berth ship. From the passage beneath that picture, I and other 11-12 year olds in my school grade at the time, are taught that this is Mungo Park, a white missionary who ‘discovered’ the mouth of River Niger, and later died in the Northern Nigerian town of New-Bussa, after a brief attack of tropical malaria. Again, I vividly recall thrilling stories of how Sister Mary Slessor allegedly ‘stopped the killing of twins’ in the ancient Nigerian city of Calabar. From the postcolonial point of view, it is arguable that an imperialist narrativization of

history may have advanced these accounts of history (Spivak, 1985). It is equally possible that elements of rhetoric, reiteration and legitimation (Grint, 1997) may offer plausible explanations of how these historical narratives found their way into my early school syllabus.

Mbigi (2005) recalled that imperial ideology and colonial education was diffused primarily through missionary schools which among others, refused to recognise Egypt as a *Black* African civilization. According to him, African children in colonial schools were also not taught the technological wonder of Great Zimbabwe, built by the *Mbire* tribe. He believed that such great African achievements were intentionally omitted from the colonial educational syllabus, and argued that this progressively enabled intellectual subordination and ideological dependency.

From this, we therefore see that the fundamental pre-occupation of the postcolonial critic is best summed up in the following three-tier categorisation (Brett 2007): First, postcolonial critique aims to unsettle hitherto dominant ways of understanding the relationship between west and non-west, as well as to question the conceptual origins of this dichotomy. It challenges the pre-conceived frameworks of knowledge and intellectualism. Secondly, it moves to challenge the economic disparities between those regions and peoples, even as it resists the spatial and economic metaphors of first-world/third-world as well as the developing/developed world dichotomy. It contends that the non-west is not 'out there', but that it is 'in here' and 'right now'.

Lastly, the postcolonial critic seeks to assert the value and legitimacy of non-western cultures, non-western thought processes, and non-western worldviews. In this, it advances a need to re-discover what it considers the marginalized and silenced voices of the heterogeneous peoples, societies and cultures of the non-west. It advocates the creation of a non-peripheral and non-marginal space for the subsequent articulation of non-western worldviews, through epistemological re-orientation and knowledge re-construction, as well as for more holistic and inclusive processes of knowledge creation and generation. Dutton et al. (1998) observed that postcolonial critique amounts to a critique of knowledges and as such, targets its own 'critical antagonism at the universalizing knowledge claims of western education' (p.2). Simply put, a key strand of the postcolonial argument is that a holistic knowledge of the world must be harnessed from a plurality of perspectives, and not from the universalising knowledge imperatives of a single imperialist worldview.

2.8.1 The Politics of Naming – Worlding and Othering

Western theory is thus seen as having produced a form of intellectual colonialism which re-orders the world along binary frameworks that have been designed to work in its favour (Dutton et al., 1998). In this, the question of difference arises, but is also intellectually exploited for economic and political reasons. The use of spatial and economic metaphors of first/third world and the developed/developing world dichotomy are believed to be more or less connotations of a binary contest between 'them' and 'us' (Darby 1997; p.2). Critics hold that these binary connotations are not innocent, but rather are covert practices of 'naming' or 'worlding' (Spivak, 1990; p. 114) in which the Colonizer is projected as 'self' and

the rest of the world is set apart, 'worlded' and subsequently homogenised as the referential 'other'. Bhabha (1994) noted that 'colonial discourse presents the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible.' (p. 70). This dichotomy is subsequently reproduced and increasingly legitimated via political and economic imperialist narratives. Spivak (1985) earlier observed that 'worlding' is what produced the third world, adding that an earlier awareness of this would have led to the production of a narrative that itself captured this process of 'worlding' and the subsequent creation of the 'third world'. It is believed that this might have served to in some way, counter the imperialist narrativization of history.

In discussing issues of 'difference', what must be considered is the mode in which the 'other' is presented in colonial discourse and again, the context within which this categorisation of *self* and *other* are understood. Bhabha (1994) argued that the aim of colonial discourse was to cast the colonized as a degenerate species on the basis of racial origin, 'in order to justify conquest, and to establish systems of administration and instruction' (p. 70)

Indeed, a disturbing picture of 'otherness' is further painted in Bhabha's (1994) analysis of Fanon's *Fact of Blackness* (1952). In this, he presents the latter's description of a scene in which a little white girl has just visually encountered a young black child:

'Look, a Negro... mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened.' ...The girl's gaze returns to her mother in the recognition and disavowal of the Negroid type; (and) the black child turns away from himself, from

his race, (albeit) in his total identification with the ‘positivity’ of whiteness’ (p 76)

In the picture the author paints above, leaning on a stereotypical framework of difference, the little white girl comes face-to-face with what she recognizes and reflexively endorses as that repugnant ‘other’. The black child, on the other hand, equally acknowledges himself as the degenerate ‘other’ and consequently *turns away* from himself, having just been assailed by the ‘negativity of his own ‘blackness’. In this, the author not only illustrates the unequal stereotype of difference, but implicitly alludes to the deifying attribute of otherness. Therefore, it is argued that the colonizer’s flawed conceptualization of difference provided a basis for *othering* in which this ‘other’ was cast as racially unequal and subsequently inferior. Postcolonial theory holds that this colonial imperative of *othering* is what provided a basis for the self-deifying worldviews of the colonizer, of its knowledge and representation of the other.

2.8.2 Knowing and Representing the ‘Other’

They *cannot* represent themselves, they *must* be represented

- Karl Marx (the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852: p.124)

Said (1978) has argued that knowledge is a form of power, because it gives its possessor authority – authority both to *own* and *define* the knowledge it owns. This question of who owns knowledge and who possesses the power to represent this knowledge has remained intensely debated. Critics assert that the Colonizer’s

political and military authority equally conferred the power to know, name, represent and theorize the colonial subjects. As Spivak (1988) noted, ‘the one who represents must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as an unrestricted government power who protects them and provides them with rain and sunshine’ (p. 71). At the same time, this is the one who must bear the burden of protecting them from the barbarity and pitfalls of remaining uncivilized; this civilizing mission is at the same time, the White man’s burden. In civilizing and in redeeming them from the savagery of their primitive ways, he must first *know* them, so that he can *represent* them, even as he must exercise the necessary authority over them; for they are not civilized, and therefore ‘cannot represent themselves’. As such, it is held that western knowledge and power not only vocally dispossessed the colonized, but also increasingly confined them to a half-life of misrepresentation and migration’ (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1983)

Postcolonial critique further suggests that knowledge has been, and to a large extent is still, produced and controlled by the West, and that its real power lies not in its political, economic and technological power, but in its assumed authority to define, represent and theorize (McEwan, 2001). This view suggests that up till the present day, the idea and discourse of development has enabled the west to own and control the past, present and future of the non-west, by defining, constructing and theorizing its histories, its ideologies, and consequently, its identities. This ‘privileging tendency of theory’ (Dutton et al., 1998) is what continues to enable not only the universalizing assumptions of western knowledge, but also its authority to legitimise the same. In challenging this, postcolonialism continually cites the insufficiency of western epistemological frameworks in grappling with

the totality, complexity and heterogeneity of the rest of the world. It stresses that the universalizing orientation of western functionalist knowledge should not only recognize, but must also respectfully acknowledge the legitimate existence of the plurality of knowledges and diverse non-western ways of knowing, of thinking and of being.

For instance, in his landmark classic *Orientalism*, Said (1978) depicted the essentializing tendency of the colonizer's language. In this he contended that the *Orient* as defined by the West, is one of the most profound images of the typified and presented other. *Orientalism* therefore, is the West's way of 'coming to terms' with the Orient, based on the narrow epistemological framework of European western experience. This fascinating 'other' is subsequently wrapped in a sizzling mystique of exoticism, its difference or strangeness, the very *essence* of its appeal to the eye of its colonial beholder. As Said explained, with *Orientalism* as the west's institutionalised way of understanding the Orient, it imposed limits and set conceptual boundaries around possible thoughts of an entire geographic region and further encapsulated the heterogeneous cultures, lives, experiences and aspirations of diverse peoples and realms of existence in just one word – *Oriental*. He concluded that this structured political vision of reality not only served to highlight, but actively promoted an increasingly institutionalised difference between *familiar* (i.e. Europe, the Occident, 'us') and *strange* (i.e. Asia, the Orient, 'them'). This is a difference that became increasingly cast in a political power-relations context of *self* i.e. Occident, dominating *other* i.e. Orient.

In the following excerpt from *Orientalism*, the author recalled that:

'In Lord Balfour's speech at the House of Commons while defending the 'British Occupation of Egypt', 'the Choice of 'oriental' was canonical. It had been employed by Chaucer and Mandeville, by Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope and Byron. It designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally... As a rhetorical performance, Balfour's speech is significant for the way in which he plays the part of, and represents a variety of characters. There are of course "the English" for whom the pronoun "we" is used with the full weight of a distinguished, powerful man who feels himself to be representative of all that is best in his nation's history. Balfour can also speak for the civilised world, the west, and the relatively small corps of colonial officials in Egypt. If he does not speak directly for the Orientals, it is because they after all speak another language; yet he *knows* how they feel since he *knows* their history, their reliance upon such as he, and their expectations. Still, he does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves.' (pp. 31)

Therefore, generating knowledge about the 'other' not only legitimised and regulated its subjugation and control, but also enabled its definition and representation by those who *knew* them.

2.8.3 *The Subaltern is Silent*

It is further suggested that imperialist representations of the Other in colonial historical narrative did not only silence the voices of the colonised, but that more fundamentally, it underscored their seeming 'inability' to speak. In her classic

seminal paper '*Can the Subaltern Speak?*' Spivak uses the term *subaltern* to describe a segment of the Indian population that have been written out of their own history by the emitters of dominant discourses. Initially, *subalterneity* or *the subaltern* is conceptualised through the myth of 'widow burning' and it describes the plight of the Indian woman who is 'doubly in shadow' because she suffers from dual relegation – first in a cultural sense as 'female' and again, from political and intellectual relegation as the 'native other'. This subject is thus silenced being unable to properly render her own experience or account of events. She 'cannot speak' to us because knowledge about her is presented either through indigenous patriarchal accounts that traditionally obscure the female experience or through imperialist narrativization of colonial history. In this case, the subaltern as female is doubly obscured and cannot be heard, because she is first of all conceptualised as subject within a patriarchal indigenous society and again, is re-inscribed and represented through imperialist narratives in hegemonic accounts of history.

Subsequently, this concept of 'the subaltern' underscores the notion of the third world subject and is fundamentally critiquing of how this subject is represented within western discourse (Norris, 2010; Spivak, 2010). It describes the predicament of the silenced colonial subject whose voice is systematically obscured from formal theoretical formations underpinned by imperialist knowledge hegemony. It is used often in a negative sense in that it paints a picture of intellectual denial or foreclosure; one in which dominant discourses not only misrepresent certain peoples but in a move that is essentially reductionist, obscures the heterogeneity of their ways of being in the development of western rational thought. Spivak terms this reductionism 'epistemic violence' and argues

that there are certain interests at work which intentionally foreclose the agency of the subaltern. Again, she questions in what or whose interest this exclusion is made possible and concludes that the development of the western moral and rational subject is itself dependent on the silencing of other non-western subjectivities (Hobbs, 2008). Postcolonial critics contend that this situation has persisted in contemporary knowledge creation and they thus advocate the use of de-constructive strategies in order to be able to re-construct the subaltern in present day thought.

2.8.4 Hybridisation and the 'Third Space'

In considering the above, it appears that idea of an epistemological re-orientation and the theoretical reconstruction of subaltern reality is not without its drawbacks. Spivak (1988, 2010) warns that in seeking to recover the subaltern voice, there is the tendency to essentialise its cultures and thus undermine its heterogeneity; a danger that may have been encountered in the growth of the renaissance school, who advocate a recourse to 'pure culture' and pre-colonial existing ways of being (more in sections 2.8). However, another argument posits that a return to the pre-colonially pure is impossible because the inherent allusion to cultural purity which such recourse suggests is problematic. In his thesis on *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) takes issue with the 'purity or essence' of culture and calls this to question. He argues that there is no such thing as a pure uncontaminated culture, but that all cultural statements and systems have been constructed in a temporal 'third space of enunciation' within which the structure of meaning and reference is an ambivalent process. That is, no culture exists in a pure and uncontaminated space; rather all cultures are enmeshed within a third space of

enunciation where their substance is continually negotiated amidst the influence of external forces. As such, 'any hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable' because all cultures lack a constitutive materiality or inherent purity, and rather than possessing a substantive intransigency, are more in a state of 'in-betweenness' (p.6). Therefore, he argues that for coloniser as well as colonised, both have been culturally 'contaminated' by each other in their interactions and that from this have emerged new forms of a cultural hybrid. For Bhabha, it is this hybridisation which occurs from the interweaving of elements of both the coloniser and colonised that thus challenges the validity and authenticity of any essentialist culture and makes the return to 'an uncontaminated state of cultural pureness' practically impossible.

In all, it is this theoretical framework which considers 'knowledges' generated by the emitters of dominant discourse as forms of exclusion of the cultural other, that provides a suitably relevant perspective from which to examine contemporary leadership theory.

2.9 Leadership Theory –Through a postcolonial lens

In view of scholarly accusations of intellectual ethnocentrism, particularly with respect to knowledge creation and representation, a pertinent concern here is with respect to the ownership and legitimation of leadership knowledge, as well as the positioning of this knowledge within mainstream theory and practice. If the ownership of knowledge confers the authority to regulate it, the question of who owns and presents knowledge about leadership becomes an important one to consider, especially in light of the postcolonial critique of knowledge

imperialism? As Said (1978) earlier argued, knowledge is a form of power and it gives its possessor authority to both define and control it – i.e. it confers the authority to both theorize and regulate that knowledge. In her analogy on the *usurpation of space*, Höpfl (2000) posits that the cancellation of one thing in favour of its substitution by another intrinsically assumes a regulatory dynamic, and presupposes the authority or power to define. That is, the offer of a proposed or better *alternative* casts the *original* in a light of deficiency and ultimately assumes the power to define what is right. This means that the alternative not only casts the original in a light of unsuitability, but also arrogates to itself a regulatory function. The regularising imperative of the proposed alternative simultaneously casts aspersions on the quality of the original, because it portrays the latter as deficient by querying the integrity of its appropriateness. She thus argues that this regulatory intention has merely arisen out of an assumed ‘power to define’.

This perspective appears consonant with postcolonial views of representation, theorisation and legitimation (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1985). Postcolonial theory holds that the portrayal of aboriginal peoples (the original) as uncivilized and primitive fundamentally justified the need for the civilizing mission (the preferred alternative), and the legitimacy of civilization’s regularising imperative lay in the perceived unsuitability of ‘primitivism’ or ‘barbarism’. Theorists observe that this enabled the dynamics of *naming* and *worlding*, leading to binary classifications of civilized/uncivilized and of developed/developing; with the power to define and regulate the other derived from colonial power and authority. It is further argued that this arrogated authority of the colonizer coupled with the ‘inability’ of the colonized to know and represent themselves, provided the basis for the latter’s

scrutiny – even if through imperially flawed lenses – and subsequently for its definition and regulation by the former. It is believed that the narrativization of this regulatory mission progressively formed the basis for ‘knowledges’ that were over time secured in intellectual regimes and disciplines.

Therefore, against this backdrop, we see that mainstream knowledge is considered a direct off-shoot of European expansionism and that this knowledge is challenged on the basis of its being representative of a particular perspective rather than a plurality of views; because it is perceived as the product of a systematic universalizing of an ethnocentric worldview.

Again, if we consider this with respect to the positioning of contemporary management and organisational theory (particularly leadership/leadership development), it is felt that this also, is an off-shoot, and consequently can be read as part and parcel of a western intellectual hegemony that has systematically endured till the present day (Prasad, 1997; Adizes, 2007).

For instance, the leadership paradigm of ‘transformational leadership’ has remained one of the most widely adopted approaches in management learning interventions, despite its many criticisms (Blunt and Jones, 1997). The notion of more powerful voices (Grint, 2000) discussed earlier might help provide useful insights to understanding this. It is suggested that what we consider as a mainstream body of knowledge is actually ‘something constructed within the context of power. That is to say that ideas which emanate from powerful groups or individuals will be presented as objective general knowledge... in the construction process, the ideas of less powerful groups are ignored, suppressed or distorted’

(Torkington, 1996; p15.). It is equally stated that ‘the suppression and distortion of knowledge in relation to black people is historical’ (p.17).

Furthermore, it is argued that such mainstream knowledge notably bears the marks of western cultural imprints, having principally evolved from western functionalist ideology (Prasad, 1997; Blunt and Jones, 1997). In light of this, it is arguable that western functionalist paradigms of leadership at best portray only a limited understanding of the leadership phenomenon.

Indeed, if we consider the argument that our constructions of the ‘meaning’ of social phenomena are derived from the rhetorical resources within our social environment; then it follows that our sense-making, understanding and practice of leadership would equally derive from the same. That is, from the thought processes, interactions, experiences, expectations, values, beliefs and all of the dynamic mental and relational resources that are ever present within the varying contexts in which we act and through which we make meaning. As Hollander & Julian (1969) observed, the construct of leadership is not only highly contextualized, but also involves constant interplay between leaders, followers and situations – all of which are steadily influenced by values, beliefs and deep-seated mental programs (Hofstede, 1991) that are invariably present in the given context within which they operate (Goffman, 1986). This is consistent with the social constructionist view of leadership in which every account of leadership is the product of various social representations and interpretations of episodes and events (Grint, 1997; 2000; 2005). As such, there can never be exact replications of an ‘objective truth’ because these accounts are impacted by people’s experiences, sense-making and interpretations, which vary contextually

In this light, it follows that the various conceptualizations of leadership which have informed the debate till the present day are no exception. That is, mainstream views or western functionalist paradigms of leadership (Blunt and Jones, 1997) are contextually defined because they also have been *framed* in context, having been drawn from the rhetorical resources therein for the purpose of sense-making (Goffman, 1986; Hollander and Julian, 1969; Hamilton and Bean, 2005). It has also been advanced that ‘modern thinking in the West about issues of management and organisation is ethnocentric because it promotes a culturally determined and largely North American view of the world of work’ (Blunt and Jones, 1997; p. 7). It is further argued that this in itself is not without its effects, as there is not only an important consideration of contextual definition, but there are two other pertinent issues – those of *cultural imprinting* (Prasad, 1997) and *contextual dissonance*. Both of these infer that these scholarly perspectives are not only contextually narrowed, but might also bear the cultural ideological imprints from the contexts within which they were contrived.

2.9.1 Cultural Ideological Imprinting

In observing management and leadership practices in organisational life, Prasad (1997) noted that many contemporary US organisations still bore the ideological imprinting of American cultural history. She argued that these leadership and management practices (including values, beliefs, actions) were often steeped in western cultural history and that because modern organisations tended to be isomorphic – i.e. characterised by uniformity in organisational practices and

procedures, such culturally imprinted practices were usually rapidly diffused through institutional isomorphism (Prasad, 1997; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The first point Prasad makes is that contemporary organisations are isomorphic in nature with their social operations, i.e. value-orientations, actions, beliefs, etc. largely characterised by an observable uniformity, which has aided the diffusion of the organisational traditions. Adizes (2007) has also implied that in addition to organisational isomorphism, these value orientations have been propagated in a quasi-religious way through business and management education, which has increasingly universalised western management education, particularly through the much coveted MBA.

A second and more relevant argument made herein is that organisations are cultural artefacts that bear the historical marks of time and that their operations are marked by cultural ideological imprinting. While observing that present day isomorphic organisations seemingly share similar cultural and ideological characteristics that promote institutional mono-culturalism, and that may have served to stifle the enactment of diversity in the workplace, Prasad (1997) maintained that this ubiquitous organisational trend of organisational mono-culturalism was rooted in two major traditions that derived from the inter-play of traditionally American cultural and historical forces – *the protestant ethic* and *the myth of the frontier*. She argued that such cultural and historical forces are what have informed and continue to shape organisational life, and that the effects on their values, actions and generally accepted practices had remained under-investigated.

The evolution of the Protestant Ethic is attributed to early settlement and commercial activity and trade in the new lands of North America. This northern trade was largely initiated and controlled by Protestant groups who reproduced their cultural ideals in their general ways of being. For instance, early Protestant doctrine regarded *hard work* as a morally and spiritually desirable virtue which would be rewarded by the divine grace of success. This is a belief which systematically endorsed and legitimised the accumulation of material wealth. This success demonstrated in accumulated wealth was thus seen as a divine reward for hard work. Over time, the Protestant values of *hard work, success, frugality, sobriety, prudence* progressively informed and shaped societal ways of being. These values have endured till the present day and continue to be reflected in organisational practices today. For instance, the basic principles of organisational accounting rest on the concept of financial sobriety and prudence, staff bonuses and rewards are made for top annual performance, and an increased bottom line is often accepted as a sign of organisational progress (Weber, 1905; 1930).

Secondly, Prasad (1997) argued that the *myth of the frontier* was equally occasioned by westward migration, but was more strongly informed by the conquest of new lands. Narratives of aboriginal conquest and subjugation produced their own mythology, which was subsequently diffused via history and art. Narratives underscored by conflict, conquest and violence were romanticised as the taming of the savage natives and the establishment of a free society, which thematically informed and reinforced theatre, movies and the rise of Hollywood. This view appears conceptually congruent with the theory of usurpation of space (Höpfl, 2000) in which the original is appropriated by the regularising imperative

of the substitute or preferred alternative. That is, the establishment of a 'free society' was deemed preferable to that of the savage primitive natives. The savage nations are what had to be usurped or cancelled to pave the way for the establishment of a more preferred 'free society'. Höpfl (2000) argues that this regulatory function casts the original as deficient and arises out of an arrogated power to *define*. In this case, it is the issue of who defines what a free society really is, and how the aboriginal societies had come to be cast as 'not free'. Prasad (1997) contends that this is what formed the basis for early conceptualisation of the *other* and informed a host of racial prejudicial perspectives in which non-Anglo-Saxon groups in America were *cast* as evil or inferior – again, in the light of the deficient former. Violence, conquest and blood thus formed the basis for the frontier myth, and the celebration of ruthlessness and rugged individualism in the face of aboriginal adversity subsequently produced the picture of the mythical 'hero', and progressively, the 'leader'.

2.9.2 Leadership and Cultural Complexity

It has been argued that western functionalist paradigms of leadership are contextually unaligned and are therefore, not suited to the complexity of many non-western cultures. Indeed, several scholars have contended that the former carry certain ideological underpinnings which are not culturally consonant with traditional African leadership values. As such, they are seen as incapable of navigating the complex ideological terrain of African culture and society.

Many studies (Tayeb, 1991; Obiakor, 2004; Bolden & Kirk, 2005) have cited the inadequacy of Anglo-American leadership theories in competently addressing the

complexities of the multi-faceted terrain of leadership in Africa. Others connect this to the pre-dominance of western scholars in the field of leadership and management, with their views and ideologies mainly informed by dynamics and interactions within the contexts of their own socio-cultural realities (Blunt & Jones, 1997; Jones, 2006). In his article on the anthropology of leadership development across cultures, Jones (2005) observed that US society appeared to favour an ideology of celebrating individualistic, strong, masculine characters. He argued that this coupled with a seeming obsession with 'self', as well as a lack of critical and reflexive perspectives, all contributed to the larger American commitment to a narrowly defined individualism, one which has over time dominated scholarly thinking in the field, and has informed traditionalist approaches of leadership development practice which mainly emphasise individualist notions of *self-knowledge/awareness* and *self-development*. Against the backdrop of a dense fabric of heterogeneous culture and value systems, it is held that this situation clearly contrasts with the socio-cultural realities in many of the more collectivist non-western societies.

Bolden & Kirk (2005) note that much of the field of cross cultural management and leadership has remained dominated by Hofstede's seminal study, They note that while this has been confirmed by subsequent studies, it may have encouraged a stereotypic way of thinking about culture which is incapable of grasping the fundamentals of leadership cultures, values and perceptions in Africa. Tayeb (1991) also criticises some aspects of cross-cultural management research, adding that the "dimensionalization of national culture"- a situation in which culture is broken down into its constituent characteristics, and its different aspects compartmentalized – may compromise the clarity of the big picture.

It has also been suggested that with regard to the issue of Africa and leadership, there appears to be a dearth in scholarly literature. Not a few scholars have recounted their search experiences in this regard in an attempt to access the relevant literature in the course of their work. Jackson (2002) observes that there is a real absence of articulated work and theory on leadership in Africa, noting that whatever there might be appears rooted in discussions around the developed-developing world dichotomy, which is detrimental to the constructive criticism and the existence of any conceptual frameworks for development in the long term (Bolden and Kirk; 2005). Blunt and Jones (1997) also noted that there seemed to be an 'absence of local alternatives' with regards to non-western leadership theory and that most modern published conceptions of leadership originated from the West. They also observed that within the domain of management in developing countries, there appeared to be more interest in the replication of Western theory and practice than there was resistance to it. Malunga (2006) and Nkomo (2008) have both acknowledged the challenge of a lack of documentation, and each records that it was not easy to find the relevant literature for their studies on the subject of leadership development in Africa.

Against the foregoing, there have been scholarly calls for a more indigenised model of leadership in Africa. These contend that western theories of leadership have not done the Continent much good, and as such should be done away with in order to pave the way for more culturally contextual models of leadership. For instance, scholars like Obiakor (2004) have outrightly denounced the relevance of western theories of leadership in the African context and have instead called for

“the institutionalisation of leadership in Africa through the use of African centred education”. He observes that African leadership appears still tied to European-centred frameworks, a situation he insists is ‘counter-productive to the sacred existence of the African peoples’ (p.1). The author contends that Africa is plagued by struggling leadership today mainly because such leadership lacks the required theoretical foundational structures required to build strong and stable societies and he attributes this to the absence of African-centred education in leadership development. It is further argued that such leadership education is required to build the much needed values of *patriotism* and *nationalism*, which are considered a pre-requisite to improving the current leadership situation, and essential to moving the continent forward. This writer concludes that leadership as a concept in Africa should therefore be ‘tied to the apron strings’ of African Cultural values, and that Africans must shift their paradigms in order to produce effective leadership across the Continent. The argument is made for the ‘institutionalization of a pragmatic system of African-centred education that opens concrete rooms for African experiments and African experiences and fosters the use of the African body, mind and soul’ (Obiakor 2004; p.4).

Similarly, Ugwuegbu (2001) has noted that African management continually mirrors the colonial legacy of a bureaucratic management structure (characterised by centralisation of power, one-way communication, etc.) which was ‘tacked on to African society by the colonialists’. In his words, ‘the leadership models inherited by most African organisations are colonial in character and process’ and mostly typify ‘a master-servant relationship’ (p.89) and that this models must change if Africans are to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

It might be helpful to outline some of the ways in which western paradigms are thought to contrast with other non-western forms of thought. Perhaps, a useful way of doing this would be to present some of the leadership value orientations arising from North American ideologies of *the protestant ethic* and *the myth of the frontier* as against what may be considered African leadership thought.

Prasad (1997) argued that violence, conquest and blood formed the basis for the frontier myth and the celebration of ruthlessness and rugged individualism produced the picture of the 'mythical hero', a quality that is further reproduced in the stereotypical images of the strong individual leader as defined by the 'western hero'. The mythical cowboy hero thus epitomised *self-reliance*, *savage ruthlessness* and *emotional detachment* as desirable masculine virtues. These values later found expression in the contemporary leadership ideals of *decisiveness*, *self-motivation*, *rationality and purposeful neutrality*, *objective impartiality*, *capitalist competitiveness*, and again *a narrowly defined individualism*. She observed that some of these ideals are mirrored in contemporary organisational heroes such as Jack Ford and Donald Trump, noting that cultural imprinting has influenced managerial and leadership styles by 'valuing and perpetuating inter-personal and communicative styles found in mythological representations of Yankee entrepreneur and frontiersman' (p. 139). Furthermore this argument holds that the stereotype of the mythical male hero and the casting of women in marginal peripheral roles, particularly in narrative forms of art provided an abetting platform for the pervasiveness of masculinity in many organisations today, as well as the proverbial *glass ceiling*. Emotional detachment and the non-portrayal of family affiliations have led to a situation in which many modern organisations perceive family responsibilities as 'unwelcome distractions

from work' (p.139). This picture is thought to contrast with that of African leadership and management thought e.g. *Ubuntu*

2.10 Conceptualising Indigenous Knowledge

However within the calls for an African Renaissance in the development of leadership and management capacity in Africa, lies an implicit allusion to indigenous knowledge (or 'is the underlying assumption of indigenous knowledge). While this is not new, what may appear problematic is the question of what is indigenous to a society and again, what may be referred to as 'indigenous knowledge'.

It has been argued that to be indigenous is to identify with a given locality or area and the term 'indigenous' has often been used to describe an identity or a process that is location bound (Cox, 2007; Murithi, 2008). In this, Cox (2007) has argued that *indigenous* does not necessarily imply originality or that indigenous people are those who first occupied the land, but that to be indigenous to a place is 'to be from it, to be native to it and hence to belong to it'. He argues that this may be used to describe those people who are native to a place and have recourse to a long standing tradition, which associates them with that specific locality and differentiates them from those who do not belong to it.

In a similar vein, Murithi (2008) describes *indigenous* as that which is inherent within a given society and subsequently, has become 'innate or instinctive' to it and distinguishes this from *endogenous* which he describes as that 'which emerges from' a society (p.17). He argues that both of these are inextricably linked, are mutually reinforcing of each other, and may be simultaneously used to describe those processes that are innate within a particular society as a result of

long-standing traditions as well as those that are presently being ‘generated and systematically reproduced’ within that society. Though both appear similar and as such unnecessary to highlight, he argues that the distinction is a subtle but important one. This is because such a distinction is acknowledging of change and continuity – i.e. the fact that culture and society are not static but dynamic and evolving overtime. As such, while indigenous approaches may be taken to refer to that which is innate and thus instinctive within a given society, endogenous processes emphasise ‘that there is a temporal process of continuously reformulating and crafting additional ways of doing things’ and are therefore organically derived processes from on-going activities within a given context. The notion of endogeneity thus allows for the combining of ancient traditions with recurrent modern processes. He concludes that because both have been internalised within that context over time, the values and beliefs that they represent are not strange and cannot be divorced from their referent society.

Going further, there are those who view ‘indigenous’ and consequently, ‘indigenous knowledge’ as conceptually problematic. In this, while the term *indigenous* is not in itself an issue, what is in contention is how it is conceptualised and used – that is, the construction of its meaning and again, how this meaning is (re)presented (Macedo, 1999; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999). For these, reference to *indigenous* and again, *indigenous knowledge* is contentious because it is viewed as a colonial construct that is part and parcel of a discourse which reinforces the unbalanced dichotomy between colonised and coloniser.

They argue that contrary to what should signify the cultural experience of the referent peoples, *indigenous* as a term has been conceptually disfigured and de-personalised, with its global contemporary meanings derived from ‘an historical

colonial relationship between indigenous peoples and their European conquerors' (Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; p.12) and often connotative of an assumed superiority of the latter over the former. In their words;

'The term indigenous has often been associated in the western context with the primitive, the wild, the natural. Such representations have evoked condescension from Western observers and elicited little appreciation for the insight and understanding that indigeneity may provide. But for others, especially the millions of indigenous peoples of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania, indigenous knowledge... is an everyday rationalization that rewards individuals who live in a given locality. In part, to these individuals, indigenous knowledge reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organise that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives' (p.12)

They hold that in order to fully grasp the meaning of indigeneity, we must first de-colonise our minds by rejecting all de-personalised (re)presentations of the Other and begin to speak of human knowledge, since 'the essence of indigenous knowledge is found in the experience of the colonised' (Macedo, 1999; xi). They argue that the indigenous peoples who inhabit their environment know what is valuable knowledge about it and what is not; because they have had to make choices about an environment which has for ages, been their source of sustenance in terms of natural resources e.g. food, water and medicine. From experiences including trial and error over time, such people know how to negotiate their environment, manage and appropriate its natural resources, treat disease and evolve local health therapies and how to pass and preserve these 'knowledges' across subsequent generations. In this view, reference to indigenous knowledge is

only meaningful if it is understood in terms of its humanistic essence or in light of meanings to its referent principal. As such, we can then begin to apprehend the usefulness of indigeneity when it is conceptualised in terms of humanism and not as a rhetorical means of inferiorisation that de-personalises the referent other.

2.11 African Leadership Philosophy

Perhaps one of the first and most clearly documented notions of indigenous African leadership can be found in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. It is a concept that is originally adapted from the *Shona* expression *umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye* which means that ‘a person is a person, through others’. *Ubuntu* is an Ndebele word (Ndebele is a language predominantly spoken in Southern Africa), and is the same expression for *hunhu* in *Shona*. It is a traditional philosophy that advances the notions of brotherhood and collective social responsibility, which have been culturally ascribed to many African societies and essentially, is one which attempts to convey the humaneness of the human being. Also expressed in *Zulu* as *izandla ziyagezana*, i.e. ‘the left hand washes the right hand and the opposite is true’ (Chinouya; 2007), *ubuntu* is a metaphor that is believed to signify the importance of group solidarity on matters of survival, particularly in deprived and dispossessed African societies, where resources for livelihood are scarce and communities must depend on each other collectively in order to stay alive. It is fundamentally a concept of sisterhood/brotherhood and collective unity for the sake of survival (Mbigi and Maree; 2005). It is ideologically premised on the view that *a person is only a person, through others*, and this perspective finds practical expression in the lived values of *relationships, reconciliation, conformity,*

compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity (Tutu, 1997; Malunga, 2005; Mbigi and Maree; 2005)

It has been argued that ‘unless development structures, strategies and processes can harness these *ubuntu* values into a dynamic transformative force for reconstruction and development, failure will be almost certain’ (Mbigi and Maree; 2005; p. 6). As such, there have been calls for an African Renaissance (Jackson, 2004) and to return to what some see as a pre-modern heritage where certain aspects of life and community, deemed crucial to the sustenance and survival of entire communities, were ritualised and held sacred; in order to create a sense of belonging and in-group inclusiveness. To this end, *ubuntu* proponents suggest aligning contemporary organizational life with African cultural experience. For instance, while Malunga (2005) recommends ritualising some of today’s organizational practices as a practical expression of *ubuntu* in the work place, Mbigi and Maree (2005) advocate harnessing ‘the traditional religious experience and sacred constitution of the African peoples’ in order to empower individuals to develop a deep sense of belonging that arises from shared practices. It is believed that such applications of *ubuntu* will no doubt engender social transformative change in the reconstruction of African society. In short, the concept of engaging *ubuntu* within the context of work and organizations emphasizes the need to draw on traditional African collective solidarity, community networks/relationships and social sensitivity in evolving new approaches to leadership and management practice.

Another notable theory similar to *ubuntu* is Boon's concept of *interactive leadership* (Boon, 1996). As in *ubuntu*, interactive leadership is cardinaly premised on close relationships, but in addition to this, it highlights the values of *accountability, honesty* and *integrity* as the basis of leadership in African communities. It is defined as 'the interaction and resultant growth and progression that occurs when individuals demand and encourage accountability, first of themselves, then of each other' (p.82) and acceptance of accountability is seen as the foundation for effective leadership in African communities. For Boon, interactive leadership is 'leadership, the African way'.

However, in the face of the above are other scholars who have criticised the renewed calls for an African Renaissance and they argue that this is as unrealistic as it is impracticable. Nkomo for one (2008, 2011) dismisses the call for a recourse to the primordial, contending instead that as against the seeming romanticisation of a 'lost cultural heritage' by renaissance scholars, African culture was as heterogeneous as it is now diverse. She argues that representations of African Leadership and Management in renaissance literature have tended to essentialise African culture and to reproduce images of African leadership as culturally homogeneous and indistinguishable across the expanse of the continent. That is, there is often a tendency to mirror African culture as 'static and undifferentiated' (p.14), and as being wholly inherited from the past and unchanged whatsoever, by the effects of globalisation and its contingencies.

Nevertheless, given the above criticisms of the tendency to essentialise the referent other, there are a few who would disagree with this view and who contend that while African culture cannot be viewed as entirely homogeneous, there does exist a high degree of cultural resonance on the Continent. For

instance, Malunga (2006) has argued for the cultural affinity of many Sub-Saharan African cultures and records that across much of Africa, society was usually structured and regulated along ethnic and tribal lines. As such, the primary unit of identification, association and belonging for the African was rooted essentially in clan and tribe and social interactions were often grounded in strong cultural affiliations, underscored by shared cultural symbolism across societies (see also Adichie, 2007).

Furthermore, Diop (1978) has also alluded to the cultural unity of Black Africa noting that most tribes shared similar ethno-cultural proclivities as well as a strong cultural affinity. Perhaps a practical understanding of this may be found in the ideology of *ubuntu* as expressed in the ancient *Yoruba* proverb – *it takes a whole village to raise a child*, a proverb which is hinged on the same ideological notion of collective responsibility, and is also popular in many parts of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Interestingly, the *Yoruba* although recognised as a prominent Nigerian ethnic group, can also be found in many parts of Togo and Benin Republic. Other similar proverbs such as *a man who lives alone is either always over-worked or always over-fed* and *he who throws a stone in the market place will hit his relative*, underscore the cultural importance of the *brotherhood* or *clan* essence. The *Hausa* as a culturally homogeneous entity are another ethnic group which are not only culturally resident in Northern Nigeria, but also in Chad, Niger Republic, Ghana and Mali, all of which are not necessarily geographically proximal.

The point here is that while African traditional society cannot be ascribed total cultural homogeneity, it is believed that there are cultural similarities. This is mainly because the primary unit of identification for the ancient African was the

tribe and social history studies show how many of these tribes previously unified as whole kingdoms and settlements were later separated by colonially imposed boundaries, divided across new geo-political lines. For instance, it is part of Nigeria's national history that the amalgamation of the North and South of the Niger River was undertaken by the British Colonial Master, Lord Lugard, and subsequently re-named by his wife Lady Lugard, as the *Niger-Area* or *Nigeria*. Therefore, even though they were separated by artificially imposed boundaries, it is held that many tribes retained their cultural identity across what many saw as artificial political boundaries. Furthermore, Blunt & Jones (1997) clearly acknowledged that in spite of its cultural heterogeneity, similarities exist within many African societies from which a 'tentative' profile may be drawn.

2.12 Leadership Development and Contextual Dissonance

In light of the above, the question of what this means for the contemporary practice of leadership development in Africa is a most pertinent one. For if indeed mainstream leadership theory is held to be ideologically dissonant, then, it follows that there might be a basis for the contestation of its relevance and applicability in the cultural context of an African society. There is equally an important question of *meaning* and *identity construction*. To suitably explore these, it is first necessary to provide a glimpse into scholarly debates within the leadership development discourse. The following section examines the question of leadership development and how it is currently understood. It briefly considers a number of important conceptualisations and scholarly perspectives on leadership development and how these might inform its current practice as we know it. It addresses pertinent questions of leadership development, particularly *how*

leadership is developed and more importantly, *what* leadership is currently being developed?

The leadership development discourse is presently informed by different views. One of the most notable developments in this topic as it has evolved over time is a seeming conceptual confusion between leader development and leadership development, an issue which has been the subject of intense criticism. A number of theorists (e.g. Day; 2001, McCauley et al; 1998) have argued that leadership development emphasizes expanding the collective capacity of organisational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes. This definition seems radically opposed to a more traditionally individual-centred orientation of leader development, one which emphasizes the development of the person and the equipping of the individual with relevant competencies to perform an anticipated role within the organisation. As such, while the latter seems pre-occupied with the development and understanding of ‘self’ and the promotion of the individual, the former has a more collectivist bias and is primarily concerned with ‘us’ and the advancement of the collective. From this side of the coin, leadership development appears better understood in terms of the development of social capital, which is constituted in and through the various relationships that are created via the dynamics of inter-personal exchange (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Whitener, 2001).

Another perspective does not seek to distinguish between the two, but rather argues that one is truly a sub-set of the other. In this view, leadership is seen as being concerned with the *self* as well as the *relational*, and involves building the capacity for groups of people to learn their way out of problems that couldn’t have

been predicted (Dixon, 1993). This view is also consistent with recent definitions of leadership as process, influence and more importantly, as relationship (Northouse; 2004). Thus, the argument here is that a suitable leadership development approach must be oriented towards building *both individual* and *collective* capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges, and also goes beyond the traditional notion of an investment in human capital to a more purposeful building of social capital. That is, beyond the act of building individual leaders through the impartation of a specific skill set or abilities, the act of leadership development must incorporate a more comprehensive and broader understanding of leadership as a 'social process' that ultimately engages everyone in the community. Wenger (1998) states that leadership development from this perspective consists of using social or relational systems to help build commitments amongst members of a community of practice, and summarizes that it should be conceptualised as an 'effect' rather than as a 'cause'. This implies that leadership development may be better regarded as a direct consequence of positive social networks, rather than as the reason for same.

Therefore, beyond the design and implementation of training modules, programmes, and other traditional methods, emphasis should be placed on building networked relationships among individuals that enhance co-operation and resource exchange in creating organisational value (Bouty, 2000; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). In this regard, the thrust of leadership development must be on building and harnessing inter-personal competence for the collective good.

Again, leadership development has also been defined within a bilateral categorisation of *integration* and *differentiation* (Hall & Seibert, 1992). In this, it

is thought of as an individual-based differentiation process wherein individuals are helped to promote an understanding of 'self' with a view to constructing their own individual identities. The product of this 'self understanding' or 'differentiation' process is subsequently applied to organisational and social imperatives to evolve an 'integration' strategy which is then geared towards helping people understand each other, co-ordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks. This argument holds that for leadership development to be considered effective, it should strive to attain acceptably high levels of both leadership differentiation and integration.

Nevertheless, scholars posit that the practice of leadership development appears increasingly dominated by traditionally individually-centred programmes and initiatives. These processed interventions often come in the form of packaged solutions, many seeking to not only enhance personal identity and self-knowledge, but also to impart the individual with a host of competencies that appear geared towards solving a pre-determined problem. (Kelly et al, 2006; Ladkin et al 2009)

However, while the above views appear suitably presented, they seem underpinned by a more universalist orientation. From the socio-cultural to the economic and political climates of the organisational environment, various factors are believed to shape individual, organisational and societal views, all of which directly impact human social interaction. In acknowledgement of this, it is advanced that rather than associate leadership development with the development of personality traits, skills and characteristics, it could more usefully be viewed as a 'situated practice' (Fiedler; 1976) and should therefore be understood from the

‘point of view of the user’ (Kelly et al; 2000). This view holds that the theory and practice of leadership development must be contextually relevant and as such, should be understood in terms of what it means to the intended user or programme participant.

According to Fiedler (1976), the organisational environment determines to a large extent, the specific kind of leadership approach that it requires. In this, the acid test of leadership theory must be its ability to improve organisational performance. He contended that the simplistic notion that a pre-selected type of leadership pattern/behaviour will result in organisational performance is in itself, no more viable than the earlier notion of a leadership trait. Although he conceded that leadership research is beginning to predict the relationship between certain leader attributes and organisational performance with increasing accuracy, Fiedler maintains that most of such predictions are more or less cross-sectional and as such, cannot accurately predict for organisations which are undergoing change and are yet to be thoroughly understood; especially with regards to the factors that are critical to leadership performance in this change process.

This argument underscores the importance of contextualized leadership development and the crucial role it plays in enhancing its relevance to the programme participant or intending user. Kelly et al (2006) suggest that prospective designs of leadership development initiatives should seek to uncover ‘patterns of interaction’ and incorporate sets of ‘teachable moments’ which resonate with participants’ experiences; a suggestion which appears hinged on the concept of ‘re-cognition’ as a possible framework for the design of such

interventions in future. This means that the efficacy of leadership development therein would lie in its perceived relevance and practicability within that society, occasioned by its 'recognizability' by members of that society who are in this case, the intending users.

Ladkin et al (2007) also write that although leadership development programmes may be designed to equip participants with a range of theories, insights and descriptions of leadership, 'program participants learn that the valuable knowledge about leading is that which they construct for themselves, in the context in which they operate and with those who they lead'. (p. 27). Again, this suggestion is visibly anchored in the social constructionist view of leadership. Therefore, for leadership development to be considered teachable and transferable, it should be 'realistically graspable' and be embodied in a concrete and recognizable form to those who must practice it (Kelly et al, 2006). That is, it must make relevant sense to the intended user and be devoid of too much ambiguity or esoterism without necessarily losing its potential as a powerful practical tool for positive change. Indeed, it may seem to be 'common sense' strategically applied, or what Alvesson & Sveningsson (2003; 183) have termed 'the extraordinarization of the mundane'; an expression which may imply a 'de-familiarization of the ordinary'. In this, 'common sense' everyday knowledge — ordinary, ubiquitous and often taken for granted — is critically explored, possibly de-constructed, re-constructed, and subsequently 'experimented with' in order to achieve positive and practical change.

In light of all of the above arguments, particularly with respect to the intellectual question of contextual dissonance, it appears that there are sufficient grounds to query the relevance and applicability of contemporary leadership development as is practiced in Africa today. I believe that this seems sufficiently justified because there are indeed fundamental and critical questions as regards the conceptualization of leadership and more importantly, the construction of its 'meaning'. Given that the question of contextual dissonance does arise, it would be worthwhile and interesting to examine *if* and perhaps, *how* such dissonance might be enacted within the learning space. Scholars suggest that the leadership learning space provides a space for the construction of identity; again, it might be helpful to explore this in the light of the leadership meanings and identities that participants construct for themselves. Furthermore, if we say that our understanding of leadership is socially constructed, then it might be useful to investigate *what* really is being constructed within the learning and rhetorical space that contemporary leadership learning interventions create.

2.13 Leadership Development - Constructing Identity and Meaning

It has been advanced that as much as leadership is socially constructed, so also is the identity drawn from it. It is said that 'identity is constructed...it is an event' (Grint, 2000;8) and one that is invariably defined by the inherent 'social and territorial boundaries' (Sahlins, 1989; 271) within which it takes place. In this, the leadership development environment may be viewed as a *container* or *space* within which the construction of leadership meaning and identity is enacted. Therefore, we may say that *identity* is a rhetorical construct (Alvesson, 2010) that

is more or less the outcome of varying reproduced accounts and interpretations, all of which fiercely contend for domination or prominence.

Again if we consider this in the context of leadership development, it is thought that participants' constructions of leadership identity may occur within the social parameters of the learning space, i.e. through the language and rhetoric of leadership education. Grint (2000) suggests that even the most revered leaders are often hindered by the social discourses within which they operate. That is, they are constrained by the rhetorical parameters within which they function. I argue that the same may hold for participants' construction of leadership identity, and that even though temporarily, this is considerably impacted by the discourse and rhetoric employed within that learning space.

Grint further argues that discourses are inadvertently powerful because even though they are an intangible cultural convention; they often appear 'real', having taken on a life of their own. In his example of *weeds*, he explains that even though weeds are defined simply as plants growing in the wrong place, they are culturally perceived as 'unwanted things to be uprooted' because the predominant cultural discourse of gardening casts them in the light of negativity or 'unwanted-ness'. The same weeds however, may be perceived by others as 'poppies' sometimes sold as 'wild flowers'. Therefore in this case, weeds are merely a cultural construct that have come to be embedded in the language or discourse of gardening as *unwanted green things*.

Likewise, I argue that the discourse and rhetoric employed within the learning environment presents a platform for the construction and negotiation of leadership identity. Alvesson et al (2010) opine that identity is not necessarily a fixed essence, but a dynamic one, and that there are indeed 'shifting and competing identities' (p.3) that vie for prominence within the learning enclosure. In unpacking this, it is important to again consider the notion of cancellation and appropriation of space. Höpfl (2000) argues that contingent on the cancellation and appropriation of a thing is equally a loss of value or meaning. That is, the cancellation of the 'original' and replacement by the 'alternative' is not without its cost, because the essence or meaning initially intended by the default is lost in the substitution by the alternative. For instance, in replacing the word 'salesman' with 'salesperson', the originally intended meaning of the phrase *Death of a Salesman* is lost in its essentially impoverished substitution with *Death of a Salesperson*. This is because while the former is enriched with a sexist connotation of gender, the latter is sexless, and in the given context, meaningless. Thus Höpfl argues that the cancellation and arrogation of space is not without its consequences; and that this is best epitomised by a loss of that essence which was initially intended and symbolized by the original. As such, the appropriation of space ultimately results in the loss of meaning. Therefore, it is arguable that the (re)construction of meaning and identity within the learning enclosure is a type of substitution and appropriation of space, which carries with it a potential risk of dislocation i.e. the 'new' displacing the 'old'. This means that such appropriation might indeed be capable of substituting the original, hitherto framed in contextual experience (Goffman, 1986), with the 'new' that is being constructed within the leadership learning context, even if temporarily. In view of this, it may be useful at some

point, to consider whether or not western functionalist paradigms of leadership as packaged in leadership development programmes carry a potentially costly risk of dislocation and loss.

However, in light of questions of contextual dissonance, this study investigates the processes, challenges and dynamics of leadership development practice, with particular emphasis on the meanings and interpretations that participants construct for themselves within the learning space. It also explores the understandings of leadership that participants negotiate even as they engage with the mainstream paradigms that allegedly, are contextually unsuited to them. Given the notion of leadership as constructed, this research explores what really is being constructed within the learning and rhetorical space of mainstream leadership development even as it is deployed in a non-western context. Simply put, this study poses the question ‘leadership development...developing *what?*’ (Jones, 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section reviews the methodological choices that have guided this research. In this, I discuss these preferences and explain the reasons for them, as well as how they align with the study. I also outline what the key considerations for this research have been, as well as the kind of study that I understand this to be. Overall in this section, I seek to defend the methodological preferences that have been employed in this inquiry.

3.2 Methodological Considerations and Implications for this Study

Research is fundamentally shaped by a paradigm and guided by theory. No matter how narrowly or tightly defined, it must be guided by some theoretical and conceptual framework without which it becomes a mindless, theoretical wasteland (Adams & White: 1994). We can only investigate what we have seen or what we assume to have seen. Mason (1996) suggests that a good research project begins with an area of interest, a choice of topic or research question, and a paradigm or perspective from which the study is subsequently approached. The research paradigm is the basic belief system or world view which guides the investigator, not only in method selection but also, in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Therefore, because the researcher's paradigm forms the basis for his/her inquiry, it follows that substantive research is possible only from a paradigm.

3.2.1 What I am investigating

In this study, I investigate the dynamics and processes associated with building leadership capacity in the context of African society. In particular, I study the application of leadership development/leadership education as a management learning intervention in the context of programme participants from the Africa region and I examine this in two ways; first, in its deployment as a catalyst for organisational change within a global non-profit organisation, and next, in its use as a tool for management development i.e. leadership education (LE) in a non-western society.

In this, I examine the knowledge about leadership presented on the programme and how participants engage with this, vis-à-vis the understanding that they construct for themselves within the context that they live and from which they must draw rhetorical resources for sense-making (Goffman, 1986). I also am keen to understand how they negotiate the knowledge encountered on the programme in light of what they bring from their lived contextual experiences of leading and being led. Against the background of scholarly arguments of contextual dissonance, it has been particularly relevant to explore this in the context being studied i.e. the question of contextual 'fit' between the knowledge that African participants encounter on contemporary LD/LE programmes on the one hand and that which they draw from the societal context that they inhabit and from which they draw resources for meaning construction (Hamilton and Bean, 2005) on the other.

3.2.2 *The Subaltern can speak*

It is suggested that the subaltern are the marginalised, the silenced, those who otherwise 'cannot speak' and whose voices are often not heard because they have been silenced by stronger and more powerful voices, legitimised by colonial power and authority (Said, 1978, Spivak, 1988). Postcolonial scholars who criticise the hegemony of western knowledge frameworks have argued that the development of western rational thought has come at a cost of silencing the subjectivities of the other, whose knowledges have remained relatively obscured from the flow of mainstream perspectives. These contend that colonial historical narratives intentionally foreclosed the agency of the subaltern, whose own perceptions and experiences were written out from dominant discourses by the imperialist narrativization of history. Postcolonial critique suggests that there is an inaccurately contrived awareness of people in the third world, because knowledge about this world has been constructed through the culturally ethnocentric lenses of the Colonizer, rather than understood through the eyes of the inhabitants themselves, a situation that underscores the subaltern's seeming inability to speak (Spivak, 1988; 2010).

It is felt that such intellectual hegemony has endured till the present day and can still be observed in contemporary organisational theory and practice (Prasad, 1997; 2000). It has been further suggested that the same may be true for contemporary management and leadership education in Africa; a perspective which has seen the rise of the African Renaissance school whose proponents decry what they describe as western functionalist paradigms of leadership and management, and who argue for recourse to African philosophical thought; as

well as a full reinstatement of traditional African values in contemporary leadership and management practice (Boon, 1996; Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi, 2005). Others scholars push for epistemic re-positioning; one that is methodologically cognisant of intellectual pluralism, which respectfully acknowledges the existence of contextual knowledge frameworks and that fundamentally, underscores the relevance of the above in relation to the referent principal (Smith, 1999; Rigney, 1999; Jack and Westwood, 2009).

For instance, in contemplating how international and cross-cultural management researchers might balance methodological relationships so that they are ‘less presumptive of a “superior gaze” ’ Jack and Westwood argue that International and Cross-Cultural Management (ICCM) research should strive to mirror a postcolonial consciousness underpinned by epistemic reflexivity. In this, reflexivity requires the recognition of the contextual specificities of the research, be they historical, ideological, cultural, and economic. They suggest that we should ‘ask novel questions in new contexts’; which practically means ‘to address an issue, location or group of people or subjectivity previously or typically excluded from consideration in our main journals and funding agencies, or overlooked by received wisdom and conventional imagination’ (p. 255). They further urge that cross-cultural management researchers should be encouraged to maintain a historical and contextual sensitivity by looking to understand the colonial, postcolonial and imperial context of the people and places under study and they conclude that ‘the concept of the subaltern and the condition of subalterneity should be introduced into the deep contextualising practices and theoretical development of future ICCM’ (p.259).

Furthermore, in her argument for the de-colonization of research methodologies, Smith (1999) contends that the world of the colonised was 'known' and represented through the intellectual framework of the colonizer, whose research she argues, drew from 'an archive of knowledge and systems, rules and values' (p.42) through which information about indigenous peoples and their societies were coded into western forms of knowledge. She insists that this archive consisted of cultural formations that included forms of conceptualisation of the Individual and society, as well as conceptions of time and space; in which western research mainly sought to establish causal effect relationships as explanations for understanding the world; relying on systems of classification, representation and evaluation for coding knowledge about indigenous peoples and their societies. Smith criticises this intellectual tradition and argues that not only did it fail to acknowledge the subjectivities of indigenous peoples, but more fundamentally, it marginalised their knowledges and reiterated the imbalance of existing power relationships. She subsequently rejects this methodological orthodoxy and pushes instead for a de-colonised research agenda that centralises the subjectivities of indigenous peoples and underscores the importance of indigeneity in the process of indigenous knowledge generation.

In this, she identifies pathways through which indigenous research may be pursued, one of which is *community research*; a community-centred approach that focuses on harnessing the ability of the indigenous peoples to reflect on their contextual experiences and develop questions and priorities of their own, as well as skills and sensitivities which may then enable the development of community-based projects.

Similarly, in seeking to de-colonise research methodologies, Rigney (1999) advances the concept of *indigenist research* as a liberatory epistemology in the research of colonised peoples and urges that indigenous researchers must look to new anticolonial epistemologies in order to (re)construct and reaffirm their knowledges and cultures. In this, he argues that liberatory epistemologies should emphasise the experiences of indigenous peoples and insists that the ‘interests, experiences, and knowledges of indigenous peoples must be at the centre of research methodologies and the construction of knowledge about them’ (p.119).

Indigenist research should therefore focus on the histories and traditions; lived contextual experiences, as well as the dreams and aspirations of indigenous peoples. To achieve this, Rigney proposes a three-step framework as follows;

- ***Resistance*** - i.e. resistance to research orthodoxy as the emancipatory imperative
- ***Political Integrity*** – i.e. with indigenous research being conducted *by* indigenous scholars. However, this does not necessarily suggest that indigenous researchers are themselves transparent, unbiased or free of internalized colonial knowledge hegemony, or that they are even better representatives; rather it posits that indigenous researchers do tend to be more aware and generally respectful of local cultural traditions and are accountable not only to their institutions, but also to their communities
- ***Privileging Indigenous Voices*** – i.e. giving priority of place to the voice of indigenous experiences. He argues that this is necessary because ‘Indigenist research *gives voice* to Indigenous people’ (p.117).

Nevertheless, he cautions that indigenist research need not necessarily be characterised by distinctive models as these may themselves evolve over time; but that indigenous researchers may draw on tools from critical theory, the social sciences and other forms of epistemological resistance that spurn positivist scientific orthodoxy in order to better articulate and further their research agenda.

3.2.2.1 Maintaining a Subaltern Consciousness

With respect to this study, I have attempted to reflect this consciousness in seeking to ‘give voice’ to those whose reality I explore. It is felt that by facilitating discussion about leadership and leadership development engagement and experience in the ‘third world’, programme participants are given the opportunity to vocally reflect on their own perceptions and experiences of the above, and are also afforded a platform through which their voices are heard. Where possible, it is hoped that this may help identify implicit paradigms of leadership wherever they exist and subsequently open up more discursive spaces for the development of conceptual frameworks for leadership capacity building in this context.

In light of the arguments for an epistemic re-positioning with respect to how we know and conceptualise the other and for a space within which such knowledges are positioned not merely as marginal, but as part and parcel of mainstream; this research attempts to mirror the condition of subalterneity (Jack and Westwood, 2009). In this, it does not merely extend the critical question of ‘developing what?’ to the context of African society (which is classed in the third world and as

has been argued, remains relatively excluded from dominant leadership discourse), but more importantly, it allows for a space in which African participants on contemporary leadership development may freely ‘speak’; one in which their subjectivities, rather than occluded from the research process, are prioritised and centred. It provides an opportunity for them to reflect and engage with their own perceptions and experiences of leadership/leadership development and through which these ‘voices’ may be heard, not merely from the margins, but hopefully, as part and parcel of the mainstream.

I have therefore been interested in the perceptions and experiences of those who inhabit this world and more importantly, in their voicing of those perceptions and experiences. This is because as has already been argued, such interactions – perceptions, experiences, expectations, etc. have been framed in context (Goffman, 1986) and expectedly, would provide an authentic insight into that lived contextual reality. Indeed – *who, better than the inhabitants of a world, can provide a more proper account of social phenomena in that world?* Macedo (1999) suggests that indigenous knowledge is embedded in the experience of indigenous people i.e. the people who are indigenous to a place; therefore in this case, ‘who more aptly could provide an authentic account of leadership/leadership development in Africa as those who inhabit that reality?’ Thus, in order to be able to uncover ‘truth’ about LD/LE in an African context, it is necessary to hear from these who are also the intending users of this (Ladkin et al, 2009) and I believe that one of the ways in which they can give a proper account is for them ‘to speak for themselves’. Semali and Kincheloe (1999) have noted ‘indigenous peoples make choices about the environment they live in – an environment which has

been for centuries the source of food, water, medicine and other natural resources that sustain them and their families; they *know* what is valuable knowledge and what is not' (p.6), and this is what the study has attempted to do, to give 'voice' to the knowledge – the perceptions, interactions and experiences of leadership/leadership development of those indigenous to Africa; those whose subjectivities are not usually present in dominant discourses of leadership/leadership development. I have not set out to scientifically classify or evaluate behaviour or preferences, neither have I desired to speak for them; rather, I believe that they can and will speak for themselves. In this, I engage with their notions, interpretations and experiences of leading and of being led and also, what this means for their understanding of leadership capacity building in the context that they live and make meaning, and within which they must practice it.

As such, it has been necessary to see not just through the eyes of researcher, but more importantly, to see as the participants see. That is, in order to provide a proper account/critique of leadership development within the given context, I have been preoccupied not just with observing social phenomena as researcher, but also with harnessing experience and with 'seeing as my respondents see'.

3.2.2.2 Maintaining Reflexivity

In maintaining a postcolonial consciousness, I am especially reminded of this need to 'see' things from the point of view of the participants and in so doing, it has been necessary to maintain a certain degree of reflexivity on my part.

In my acknowledgement of this, I have been mindful of two things – that I am first of all what you might call 'a native' of that part of the world. That is, I was born and raised as an African Child in Africa and in a sense, one might say that I

‘know’ about Africa in a lived experienced way, having lived there for most of my early life. Secondly, I am also an African Scholar with a keen interest in critical management studies. The inference is that I may (un)consciously carry prejudices that have resulted from my being both of the above and again, that I seek to explore and critique in a world that in some way, is already known. It is within this realisation that I have struggled with laying aside my personal pre-suppositions and prejudices as a native of that part of the world and also, as a scholar of African descent; realising that I must now ‘see’ with fresh eyes.

It is for the above reasons that I have adopted a qualitative research paradigm with phenomenological underpinnings. That is, first, I have sought to ‘see as participants see’ in order to be able to comprehend the essence of their experience/s and second, I have made to address my own personal pre-suppositions as a native of Africa and a critical scholar of third world extraction.

While qualitative research is rich-detail driven, phenomenology as part and parcel of this essentializes experience. It acknowledges the socially constructed nature of knowledge about phenomena (e.g. leadership) and underscores the importance of knowing phenomena in context, a view that is consistent with the objectives of this study. It suggests that in order to do this, the researcher must attempt to ‘bracket’ all pre-suppositions and see as participants see. (*See section 3.4 below*).

Thus, in mirroring a postcolonial consciousness, this research is driven by a need to engage the voices of those who speak from the margins and more so, to apprehend the meaning and essence of what is spoken.

Given the emancipatory imperative of postcolonial critique in that it critically advocates the non-silencing of subaltern subjectivities, it is felt that

phenomenology as a qualitative research framework which fundamentally underscores the essence of experience may be methodologically suited to this.

3.2.3 Adopting a Qualitative Paradigm

Therefore in this study, I am preoccupied with rich qualitative detail. I focus on exploring the learning and lived experiences of African participants on contemporary LD/LE programmes as well as understanding what such experiences uniquely infer for my respondents, particularly in terms of situatedness or relevance to the intending user. I am interested in *meaning* and through these experiential accounts, I seek to understand what it is that participants ‘construct’ for themselves through the leadership learning process and lived experience. In this I adopt a qualitative research paradigm, one that is grounded in a constructivist interpretivist approach. This study is focused mainly on exploring social reality and the dynamic interactions of the social actors that inhabit that reality. It is especially concerned with investigating human perceptions, interpretations and experiences of a social phenomenon – leadership/leadership development in space. It reflects the need for a detailed understanding of the way leadership is experienced and developed in the context of non-western society and it is thought that a qualitative approach to research is best suited to this study.

However, this is not without an acknowledgement of the fact that there are indeed differing ideologies and philosophies as to how we view and understand the world (Denzin et al, 2004; Walliman, 2006), and that there are other ways in which this study could have been approached (Guba and Lincoln, 2000; Bryman, 2004). For

instance, while it may have been possible to apply a quantitative framework, it is felt that this would have been impractical for the following reasons;

First, quantitative research is thought to be traditionally underpinned by an objectivist positivist paradigm, one that has a rigid view of the world, is at odds with the view that knowledge about social phenomena is constructed and in which social actors are seen as existing independently of the social reality or social entities within which they function. In this, social reality is removed from us, and this separate detached social external which exists independently of us, is one over which we cannot exercise control. As such, because social interactions supposedly occur within a separate independent reality which is itself controlled by measurable variables and constants, they are situated within a pre-existing framework of universally applicable, immutable and generalizable laws. According to quantitative researchers, knowledge generation about social reality must therefore be approached from within this context, since it can only be approximated 'through the utilization of methods that prevent human contamination of its apprehension or comprehension' (Guba and Lincoln, 2000; p.176).

Nevertheless, in thinking about this, I am faced with the realisation that the present research has been embarked upon with a view to investigating *human experience*, something that cannot be quantitatively codified or effectively generalised as such (Husserl, 1964, Pivcevic, 1970). This consideration is what has first and foremost, made the adoption of a quantitative outlook seemingly impracticable in this case, and subsequently informed my choice of a more qualitative approach. This is because qualitative research acknowledges social reality as being also constructed through the various interactions of the social

actors therein, rather than as entirely resident in the absolutely generalizable external. It advocates a merging of social phenomena, in that it views social actors as being inseparable from the social entity or context in which they function. As a result of this, qualitative researchers posit that it is impossible to effectively study the intricately woven dynamics of human social interactions without respecting and providing for the diversity and uniqueness in human experience.

‘Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the real world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self... qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world.’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008;

4)

This exercise is geared at exploring each individual account in appreciable detail and as such, I believe that a more constructivist interpretivist approach is best suited to this study because it acknowledges the variation and uniqueness of human experience. Seeing therefore, that I am much more concerned with ‘seeing’ as my respondents ‘see’, I reason that the adoption of a positivist or objectivist philosophy would not quite capture the very grain of each individual’s experience and this is why I am less inclined to adopting a quantitative approach. Bryman (2004) supports this in saying that positivism advocates a value-free and objective approach to social research which must be devoid of all subjectivity or human influence. In light of the above, I find that the interpretivist view of social research seems much more suited to this study as it affirms that any acceptable approach to social inquiry must first of all, recognize and respect the distinctiveness of human

beings and their interactions, and that it must then seek to understand rather than necessarily codify or generalise human behaviour. In this study, I am not hypothesizing neither do I seek to test the validity of any statement; rather, I am concerned with 'process' in considering the experiences of my respondents and what it all 'means' to them; and this is why I have refrained from employing a Quantitative approach.

Secondly, quantitative research is thought to be deductive in nature, often centred on an initially deduced hypothesis which is further subjected to empirical scrutiny. In this, propositions and hypotheses are reached theoretically usually through a logically derived process (Denzin et al, 1998) and evidence is then used to support and authenticate these propositions. Therefore, the researcher, guided by the knowledge and assumptions of a particular domain, and by theoretical considerations in relation to that domain, deduces a hypothesis that must then be examined in order to provide an explanation for these assumptions (Bryman, 2004). Theory and the hypothesis deduced from it subsequently inform the data collection process. In qualitative research however, theory is believed to be emergent because it usually employs an inductive approach from which knowledge may be generated, in which research propels theory. That is, while engrossed in studying social reality, we may derive recurring patterns and associations from which theory eventually emerges (Denzin et al, 2004). In considering the above, it is felt that the present research bellies an inherently inductive nature, one that may be regarded as potentially theory emergent and as such, appears logically inclined towards a more qualitative bias.

Furthermore, I have refrained from a quantitative approach to this study because I take no preceding position on it and as such, deduce no clear hypothesis from its inception. I have not set out to prove or disprove anything, but rather to study elements of social reality independent of any pre-determined range of outcomes, which is a distinct characteristic of qualitative research (Denzin et al: 1998; Bryman 2004). This researcher is thus not guided by any logically derived hypothesis within this domain, but rather seeks to explore elements of social reality with a view to discovering new insights therein. This means that I am not strictly propelled by existing hypothetical considerations nor do I look to substantiate 'truth' per se. I am also not looking to statistically explain the behaviour of the researched in order to be able to generalize my findings. Rather, I am content to let the themes emerge, if indeed there be any. The inductive nature of this study is therefore revealed in the fact that I seek to identify themes and patterns perhaps intricately woven within the fabric of social interactions; which may or may not lead to the promulgation of theory upon further research. Nevertheless, I have worked with an open mind and optimism that the final research findings would provide new and in-depth insights into this subject of study.

Finally, as opposed to quantitative research which concerns itself primarily with means of scientific observation, measurement and experience and as such would in data analysis employ the use of statistical frameworks including graphs, charts and mathematical models and quantified variables, the qualitative researcher is much more concerned with viewing things from the individual's perspective, i.e. seeing things as the respondent sees them. He/She places much more emphasis on

intentionality, rationality and meaning in the dynamics of human social relations, stressing the importance of process and meaning which cannot be measured in terms of quantity, amount, frequency or intensity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Walliman, 2001). In this, the use of person-to-person contact, first-person account, historical narratives, life history as instruments of inquiry are often employed and the focus is more often than not, on rich interpretive detail.

‘...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:5)

I am thus in search of what ‘meaning’ lies in the varying experiences of my respondents and it is exploring in detail such ‘meanings’ within each varying account that constitute my foremost endeavour. This is because I agree that in order to understand social actions, we must first of all grasp the ‘meaning’ that actors attach to their actions (Taylor, 1993). I am concerned with understanding the diverse accounts of my respondents and the significance that such may hold for them, and apparently, the way in which the people being studied, understand and interpret their social reality is one of the central tenets of qualitative research. Therefore, as I collect data, it is done with the intention of drawing as much detail as I could from these interpretations, detail which is viewed as indispensable to the study, even as I must extricate ‘meaning’ in the course of each experiential narrative. Lastly, with regards to presentation, findings from this investigation so far, are expressed in words rather than in a statistical form i.e. graphs, tables, ratios, percentages or numbers as is Quantitative research

Against the foregoing, this study is approached through a qualitative research framework, it has been impractical to apply a quantitative approach to this research as it is felt that the latter lacks the capacity for understanding human social interactions in as rich and detailed a manner as the former.

This is because not only am I concerned with respondents' engagement, experience and as such interpretations of social reality, I also observe that in order for us to study the individuals within society, we must first of all examine closely, their values and actions, so as to fully comprehend the many structures and intricately woven dynamics of social systems (Walliman 2004).

This implies that the research results in this mainly derive from the exploration of social engagement, experience and the meanings attached to them i.e. from participant constructions and interpretations of social reality; which are generally acknowledged as varying, even if only slightly. For instance, in a situation where A and B have had to recount their experience of the world, what has affected A in one way, might have impacted B in a completely different one. As such, the researcher has had to rely on the information generated from the respondents, who all have the capacity to construct and interpret social reality in different ways. Therefore, in the words of Denzin & Lincoln (1998), my own concern as a qualitative researcher in this case, would be to 'stress the socially constructed nature of society...and whatever situational constraints that may have shaped the inquiry' (p.42).

3.2.4 A Qualitative Case Study

In the process of selecting the research methodology and keeping the necessary considerations in mind, I have made to balance philosophical issues with technical

ones. In trying to achieve this, I have given due consideration to the point that the choice of research method should also be informed by the purpose and circumstances of the research rather than solely determined by prior methodological and philosophical commitment (Hammersley, 1992). Therefore, given the research context, a suitable way to appropriate this understanding has been through the application of the Case Study.

The Case Study has been defined as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context’ (Yin, 2009; p 18). Another definition suggests that the Case Study is not a methodological choice; rather, it is a choice of what is to be studied (Stake, 2005). That is, it is about a strategic qualitative focus on ‘the case’. In this, the case study is concerned with a specific interest in *the individual case* under inquiry, more than it is in *the methods* of inquiry employed, and the fundamental emphasis is primarily on the question of ‘what can be gleaned or understood from this particular case?’ As such, in understanding the case, we are particularly preoccupied with understanding its complexities.

The Case Study has been classified on what might seem a functional as well as a structural basis, that is, as regards its use or application within a given research context. With respect to the former, Yin (2009) identifies 3 broad categories – an *Exploratory Case Study* that might generate propositions for further inquiry; an *Explanatory Case Study* often premised on investigating and explaining relationships and lastly, a *Descriptive Case Study* that would mainly describe occurrences of a given phenomenon.

For Stake (2005), the case study could be classified as an *Intrinsic Case Study* which is used to generate a deeper understanding of a particular case and in which

the central focus is not necessarily on generalising findings or theory building but with unravelling the story of the case itself, without necessarily seeking to relate it to a separate construct or to make contingent generalisations. It could also be termed an *Instrumental Case Study* in which the case plays an instrumental role in generating further insight into an already existing issue, such that interest in the case is more a secondary one because it is undertaken to enrich our understanding of an external interest or a separate phenomenon. Again, there is also the *Multiple/Collective Case Study* in which a number of cases are jointly studied in order to investigate a thing and more interest is placed in the integrated outcome/s of a collection of cases.

With respect to this research, it has been necessary to employ a Case Study investigation for two main reasons. First, the phenomena to be studied, or the subject of inquiry is currently enacted within an organisational setting. This framework is what has informed the choice of method. The leadership learning intervention herein studied is conducted within the context of the organisation, and as such cannot be feasibly divorced from its social and physical setting. Therefore, if this intervention is to be effectively studied, then it follows that it can only be sufficiently apprehended within this framework in which it occurs. Stark & Torrance (2005) have stated that the case study involves the study of social reality *situated* in particular contexts and histories.

Secondly, it has been stated that a case can be viewed as a system which has specific boundaries within which activity is patterned (Stake, 2005). Therefore, I argue that each organisational setting is a bounded entity *within* which social activity such as management learning (with its perceptions, interpretations and

constructions) occurs. Being a bounded entity, it is arguably a unique and specific case in itself primarily because boundedness and activity patterns are themselves useful elements of specificity (Stake, 2005). So far, this research has remained centred on investigating the *activity* of leadership development interventions within the organisation, which is itself a *bounded* entity.

For this reason, I have intentionally applied a Case Study approach largely because the case study is fundamentally underpinned by *specificity* – having a specific focus, specific features/activities occurring within specific boundaries. In this case, ‘the prime referent is the case, not the method by which the case operates’ (p.444).

As such and for the purposes of this inquiry, I would primarily view this as being both an exploratory (Yin, 2009) as well as a multiple/collective case study (Stake, 2005) thesis. Indeed, the first case study may be considered more of an exploratory one because over the course of the research, it has evolved as a practical basis from which propositions for further inquiry have been generated, a consequence of which is the Lagos Business School case study. Secondly, it may also be viewed as multiple/collective case study research because it has involved the study of more than one bounded specific entity i.e. the study of more than one case in order to sufficiently investigate the subject matter in the given socio-cultural context.

3.2.5 *An Alternative?*

Another possible approach initially considered for the purpose of this research was *Ethnography*. Originally developed and used extensively in the field of anthropology in order to observe the ‘ways of being’ within a given social group,

Ethnography involves studying people, their experiences and culture over a period of time (Firth, 1961; Hymes, 1982). It has also been defined as the study of people's behaviour in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, and is concerned with the cultural interpretations of such behaviour (Watson-Gegeo, 1988), with an emphasis on the cultural patterns or dynamics within that behaviour.

While ethnography might have seemed a suitable alternative to the inquiry, I refrained from adopting it because as a research method, it involves the holistic study of people in their cultural settings, including their construction and maintenance of the cultural meanings that inform their actions over an extended period of time (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Ethnography is believed to differ fundamentally from other forms of qualitative research chiefly because of its emphasis on holism and also for the way it treats culture as integral to the analysis rather than as one of many other factors to consider (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Indeed, while considerations of culture and context are pivotal and important to this study, I observe that they do not necessarily form the entire basis for the analysis herein.

Secondly, this approach would have required that I closely observe and engage with respondents for an extended period, which arguably may have lasted anywhere from two months to ten years. Given the relatively short time within which I had to complete my research project, it would have proved difficult for me to conduct any in-depth ethnographical study within this time. Furthermore, observing my respondents collectively for the period required for ethnographical study would not have been feasible, considering the impracticability of gathering and keeping them all together in one place for the required length of time. Again,

there was also the ethical danger of ‘going native’, a pertinent risk that is closely associated with long-term ethnographic studies.

3.3 Data Collection

The data for this research came primarily from two sources – *interviews* and *observation*.

3.3.1 Interviews

Participants were interviewed across various programme sites in London, Switzerland and Nigeria through the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. According to Bryman (2001), the *interview* is perhaps the most popular method of data collection in qualitative research and it is defined as a conversation that is held for the sole purpose of generating knowledge, which can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured (see also Fontana & Fray, 1994).

Initially, I had wanted to use unstructured interviews, but I decided against using this method as I thought it necessary to lightly guide the interviewees in the process. This, rather than interfere with the ‘essence’ of their recounted experience, merely stimulated more enriched and subject-focused responses while preserving the uniqueness of the individual’s own account. This semi-open ended framework that I employed served to gently guide my respondents towards what was considered the more relevant areas of their experience and such as they were also willing to share. I refrained from using structured interviews as applying this method would have involved administering a specific set of pre-determined questions. This would have left very little room for individual flexibility in the gathering of data because the interview would then be conducted within the rigid

framework of pre-determined questions most probably derived from the writer's own pre-conceived notions of the subject matter. As such, they did not necessarily comprise of a definite set of questions per se, but instead highlighted certain aspects of the subject around which the respondents freely expressed themselves. This made for more ordered responses and also helped respondents to pin-point what areas they were more willing to explore.

Interviewing was conducted across various learning sites in two case studies. In the first, I interviewed the African participants at programme events in London and Switzerland and for the second case study I travelled to Nigeria to speak face-to-face with programme participants. Although programme participants in the first case organisation were drawn from various continents, it was those from the Africa region that I specifically chose to interview and the reason for this was not far-fetched. For if I was looking to investigate contemporary leadership development in relation to Africa, then again, *who better than the inhabitants of a world, can provide a more proper account of that world?* I was interested in how participants from Africa engaged with the learning intervention they encountered in this case, being the intending users who were expected to apply this in the context of society in which they lived and worked. I believed that they held the 'lived' experiential insights to the contextual issues that I was seeking to address. Therefore, while it may have been interesting to interview other delegates, it seemed more expedient to focus on the Africans at this time, given the nature and scope of the research.

In the second case, all programme participants were Africans and I spoke to as many who were willing to be interviewed, under the time constraints in which they worked.

In total, 47 semi-structured interviews were conducted that lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, depending on how long it took to respond and to discuss the relevant issues raised in the course of the interview. With the consent of both organisations, I was allowed the use of a recorder and participants were made aware that the interviews were being recorded for research purposes and they also gave their consent. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymity as well as the use of pseudo-names and alphabetical labels such as – CS101, CS102, Participant A, Participant B, etc. (Please see Chapters 4 and 5).

3.3.2 *Observation*

Participants were mostly observed in their ‘natural’ class settings. Apart from environmental, learning and demographical features like class ambience, programme structure and delivery, gender, age, etc., particular attention was also paid to interactions – between group and facilitator, and among the group members themselves. Field notes were taken during the class sessions and also as I randomly observed phenomena outside of these sessions.

My preference for *observation* as an instrument of data collection was informed by a number of important considerations. It seemed this choice was well in line with the research approach, and suitably aligned with its philosophical paradigm, and I found support for this in the following statement

Observation is also consistent with 'seeing through the eyes of', i.e. viewing events, actions, norms, values etc. from the perspective of those who are being studied. (Bryman, 1988; 61)

I applied this not just as an instrument of data collection, but also as a means of data *triangulation*. This was to ensure an acceptable measure of rigour, and so I chose not to rely solely on interview data to provide this. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state that triangulation is simply 'exposing a proposition – i.e. the existence of an issue or concern; the validity of some alleged fact; the assertion of an informant – to possibly countervailing facts or assertions or verifying such propositions with data drawn from other sources ... as statistical means are more stable than single scores, so triangulated conclusions are more stable than any of the individual vantage points from which they were triangulated' (p.107).

Triangulation is not only required to provide the basis for contextualising research findings, but is also considered particularly welcome in respect of demonstrating research validity. In this regard, Gomm (2008) writes that one of the strongest criticisms of *interviewing* as a research method is that the data it generates are merely a record of interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee, with only a doubtful relationship to whatever it was that the interview was supposed to be about (p. 269). Clearly, this criticism underscores the need for a clear demonstration of research rigour and subsequently, I thus opted for the observation method as a logical choice in fulfilment of this requirement. Guba and Lincoln (1981) affirm that 'the quality of simultaneity... that is, the *I was there* quality, is enormously persuasive, not only to the observer but also the others to whom the observer reports. The absence of a time lag between the observation

(i.e. data collection) and recording is a *major guarantee* of validity'. (p. 192).
(Emphasis is mine).

Secondly, in seeking to understand participant engagement in contemporary leadership development, I stayed mindful of the fact that situational constraints are known to shape qualitative inquiry. With this in mind, I believe that the researcher has a responsibility to study and report events in context. By this, I mean that there is a need for the researcher to consciously frame his/her inquiry within the context in which it takes place. This is because in order to provide a meaningful understanding and appreciation of what it is that has actually taken place i.e. *experience*, there is an equally pertinent need to contextualise that experience, so as to be able to make sense of it. It has been argued that for us to be able to contextualise any emerging themes, it is necessary to understand the social environment in which the interactions have occurred, or the context in which the experiences are lived (Bryman, 1988). It is equally suggested that 'whatever the sphere in which data are being collected, we can only understand events when they are situated within the wider social and historical context (Silverman, 2006, p.68). In light of the above, I chose to employ observation as a second data collection method because I felt that it would afford me the opportunity to sufficiently situate my inquiry, *to be there* in the social and relational context within which the learning events were occurring, alongside interview accounts. Inasmuch as the individual experiential accounts were crucial to explore, I believed that it was equally necessary to be able to contextualise these in observation accounts as captured in field-notes.

Observation is described by Adler and Adler (1994) as the fundamental base of all research methods and this singular method belies a number of categorisations. However, I observe that this section will not be complete without a brief mention of some of the frustrations encountered in the course of my theoretical journey. As I attempted to familiarise myself with the concept of *observation* in the social sciences, I found that quite a number of texts seemed to use the words *observation* and *participant observation* interchangeably. Initially, this did not appear much of a problem until I realised that in just as many others, *participant observation* and *ethnography* were also used interchangeably. In the following quote, Adler & Adler (1994, 2003) address what may have previously seemed to me, a conceptual confusion

‘Qualitative observation has remained under-addressed in the methodological literature. It has been elaborated for the student audience in some general methods texts that treat observation as one research strategy in a broad consideration of all data gathering techniques... Yet observation by itself has remained a step-child to its more widely recognised offshoot: participant observation. Most of the major research treatments of qualitative methods focus on participant observation to the virtual exclusion of observation as a method in its own right’ (p. 378)

Initially, it appeared that I was struggling to situate and articulate this preference of the observation method within a broader discourse of participant observation. However, because this was clearly not intended as an ethnographic study, I found myself in a dilemma of sorts as I struggled to find ways to apprehend and negotiate this situation. Reprieve came in the writings of Silverman (2006), Flick (2006) and Bailey (2007) and Bryman (2008) which mostly acknowledge this

conceptual confusion as they attempt to shed light on this categorisation. Bailey (2007) especially notes that the terms *participant* and *non-participant* observer indicate the extent to which the researcher becomes physically involved in the field setting. In this, there is also the question of whether the observation is done *covertly* or *overtly*, i.e. whether or not the presence of the researcher is disclosed to the researched.

In this case, I had approached the data field as an overt observer in which the researched were aware of the researcher's presence and intentions and in which data collection was openly conducted (Silverman, 2006; Flick, 2006). I also assumed the role of observer-as-participant (Gold, 1958) even as I attempted to study the social space within which the organisational learning activities occur. In this, I was not a full participant but more of a quiet observer – who was sometimes open to the occasional chat with participants – even as I cognitively negotiated the flurry of activity around me.

Nevertheless, at certain times, I found myself wondering at what point exactly I may have been classified as participant observer or farther still, an ethnographer, given the often inclusive nature of human interaction. Initially, this seemed another mild source of frustration for me, but I found some respite in the realisation that

‘At times, it is difficult to assign a categorical label to the researcher's level of involvement in a setting. For many researchers, the degree of involvement is often highly variable, and the mere act of observing can function as a form of interacting because of its potential for reactivity’ (Bailey, 2007; p. 81)

Again, I found greater theoretical bearing for my understanding and subsequent adoption of this researcher position i.e. observer-as-participant, in the words of Bryman (2008)

‘Some writers might also question whether research based on the observer-as-participant role can genuinely be regarded as ethnography, but since it is likely that certain situations are unlikely to be amenable to the immersion that is a key ingredient of the method, it could be argued that to dismiss it totally as an approach to ethnography is rather restrictive’ (p. 411)

With the above in mind, I confidently assumed the stance of the observer-as-participant as a second, and by no means less important, instrument of data collection for this study.

However, it is important to note that there are important ethical considerations to be made in carrying out observational research, particularly in the social sciences. Among these are issues of consent, of maintaining privacy and confidentiality, as well as keeping honesty and integrity in the presentation of data. Prior to the commencement of the research, consent was sought and obtained from both organisations. Not only was there informed consent, but observation was overtly conducted and in both cases, participants were made well aware of what would be taking place. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of anonymity and participant coding. I also tried to maintain honesty in my presentation of the data by keeping key organisational members informed as regards the progress on the study and findings. In the case of the first organisation, I presented a report at the end of each learning session, and participated daily at the Planning Team meetings, often offering constructive criticism. With the second organisation,

communication has remained open over the course of the research and on-going contact has been maintained with key organisational members as regards progress on the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Analysing Interview Data

Interview data were analysed primarily through a phenomenological framework. This is because the study focused significantly on exploring the experiences of African participants on contemporary LD/LE programmes and on giving ‘voice’ to these. Phenomenology essentializes experience (i.e. it primarily emphasises the importance of harnessing experiential accounts in the process of knowledge generation) and echoes the notion that knowledge of any given social phenomenon does not reside in an absolutely generalizable external, but is socially constructed. It therefore underscores the relevance of knowing in context and suggests that in order to do this, the researcher must first of all ‘bracket’ his/her pre-suppositions and see as respondents see. At this point, it is necessary to state that I have remained wary of being rigidly confined to any one philosophical thought school, as it was felt that this could potentially undermine the degree of research flexibility which may have been required as I went along. However, this piece of research has borrowed from the above thought school and consequently, bears a phenomenological leaning in the analysis of data. Nevertheless, even as I have found this relevant to engage with in the course of the study, the overall approach has remained generally qualitative as it stands, without necessarily being rigidly confined to a specific philosophy.

The word 'phenomenology' was first popularized by Hegel in his book *Phenomenology of the Spirit* first published in 1807 (Pivcevic, 1970) and derives from two words, namely *phainomai* ('to appear') and *logos* ('to reason'). It has from that time, been extensively studied by many scholars including Husserl who is described by Vandenberg (1997) as *the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century*. Husserl evolved phenomenology as a philosophy that aims to describe how the world can be constituted and experienced through conscious acts. He refuted the notions that that pre-supposed information about real world objects is reliable, arguing instead that in order for us to be certain about a phenomenon, any prejudiced pre-conceptions must be disregarded i.e. 'bracketed'; a process which he termed 'phenomenological reduction'. Eagleton (1983) noted that Husserl's idea of phenomenology implies 'returning to the concrete' or *Zu den Sachen* i.e. 'to the things themselves'. Furthermore, Pivcevic (1970) suggested that in the study of phenomenology; whatever appears, appears in concrete experiences and that there is no 'unexperienced' appearing. Other scholars like Merleau-Ponty (1961) defined phenomenology as the 'study of essences'. He argued that phenomena, i.e. objects and events should be studied with a view to drawing out their *essence* or *reason for being*.

In basic terms, phenomenology simply means to describe objects or phenomena as we 'see' or 'make sense' of them while extracting understanding or meaning in the process. Kant (1781) explained this as the study of objects and events as they appear in our experience. Hammond et al (1991) defined 'phenomenon' as simply anything that appears or presents itself to someone, while Somekh & Lewin (2005) further explain phenomena as comprising anything that human beings live

or experience. Thus, phenomenological studies are mainly concerned with the extrication of *meaning* or the derivation of *essence* from an experienced thing and *phenomenology* means to describe phenomena as we experience or make sense of it, while extricating meaning, insight or understanding in the process.

As such, while a number of people encounter what might appear as the same phenomenon, their interpretations of it would often vary regardless of the fact that they all may seem to have experienced the same thing. These differences might occur due to contextual differences, social and cultural beliefs, varying personal circumstances, etc. Such variations are what make each individual's experience unique, meaningful and value-laden and in my consideration, worthy of in-depth exploration, a view that aptly mirrors the objectives of this study. In addition, its tendency to recognise and respect individuality in social research is vital to the preservation of the uniqueness within each personal account, and ultimately crucial to the originality and validity of research findings.

In light of the above, I have brought this analytical framework to bear on data for the following reasons; first, in engaging with issues of meaning and construction, a great part of the research interest lies in the realm of *experience*. Phenomenological studies are concerned with studying the 'lived' experiences of people in the world and their investigations lie in the domain of experience (Pivcevic, 1970). I find support for this in the affirmation that a researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experience of people who are involved with the topic under research (Holloway, 1997). Since my study is concerned with how participants experience contemporary leadership development, I found this to be an extremely relevant perspective from which to

pursue my work. Hammond et al (1991) suggested that phenomenology involves the description of things as one experiences them, or of one's experiences of things.

Secondly, I adopt this because therein is the realisation that peoples' experiential accounts often vary, even if they seem to have been exposed to the same object or event. What may determine their individual interpretation of these experiences are the situational constraints or contexts that frame them (Goffman, 1986) and it is necessary to acknowledge the voices that reflect these. According to Somekh & Lewin (2005), phenomenology is the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social contexts in which the phenomena occur, from the perspective of those who experience them. In his paper titled '*The Phenomenology of Epistemic Claims*', Zaner (1970) argued that every claim to knowledge is contextual and that such a claim occurs within a specific situation of action, belief or inquiry i.e. within a particular sphere or province of meaning, and as such, no claim can be properly understood or analysed except in light of the specific context.

What I seek to establish here is that the central tenets of phenomenology are well aligned with my conviction that each person's experience of social reality is valid, rich in meaning and laden with value; and that the richness of such experiences should be explored and understood. Likewise, Welman & Kruger (1999) opine that the phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved. Phenomenological analysis is therefore 'concerned with understanding how the everyday inter-subjective world is constituted (Schwandt, 2000; 192), and the aim is to grasp how we come to interpret human social actions as meaningful.

A third and final reason for adopting this was with respect to reflexivity. Within this framework, there is room to first bracket my pre-suppositions of the subject, in order to be able to see as my respondents see.

In this, I have adopted *Hycner's guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data* (1985), in which he outlines the important procedures that may be followed in the phenomenological analysis of interview data. Far from being a 'cookbook procedure' that confines the researcher to a rigid framework for qualitative data analysis, Hycner notes that these guidelines are merely 'a suggested method' which aims to sensitise the researcher to the pertinent issues that need to be addressed in analysing interview data. More explicitly, he adds that 'no method (including this one) can be arbitrarily imposed on a phenomenon since that would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon' (Hycner, 1985; p. 280).

The steps taken to analyse data include;

1. *Transcription* – Recorded interviews were transcribed from sound format to written notes
2. *Bracketing and Phenomenological Reduction*: In this, I resolved to be open and approached the transcripts with this attitude. Here, the researcher is expected to 'bracket' his/her response to separate parts of the conversation and allow the event to emerge as a meaningful whole, and this is what was done.

3. *Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole* – Next, I listened again to the interviews alongside the notes in order to ensure I had captured the entire picture and had not left out anything, and also to gain familiarity with the accounts.

4. *Delineating units of general meaning*: In this, I tried to identify units of general meaning. It involved the rigorous process of going over phrases and sentences in order to capture the essence of what was said. Transcripts were read and re-read with a view to identifying coherent sentences amidst a sea of speech mannerisms such as ‘uh’ and ‘erm’. Hycner states that it is more or less a ‘crystallization or condensation of what the participant has said, still using as much as possible the literal words of the participant’ (p.282).

5. *Delineating the units of meaning relevant to the research question*: This next step involved determining which of the coherent units identified in step 4 were most relevant to the research questions.

Hycner notes that this requires some sort of “judgment call” on the part of the researcher and that while s/he remains open to the data while applying a rigorous approach, then the danger of inappropriate subjective judgments is considerably minimised. However, I tried to exercise caution as I had to maintain an awareness of the subjectivity of my own judgements.

6. *Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning* – Given the time and scope of this research, it was not possible to do this.

7. *Eliminating redundancies:* Upon identifying the units of coherent meaningful speech that seemed most relevant to the research question, the next step was to eliminate redundancies by crossing out all incoherent expressions as well as those parts of the conversation that did not directly address the questions asked.

8. *Clustering units of relevant meaning:* Having eliminated all redundant parts of the conversations from each account, all coherent relevant units were clustered into separate groups based on what each seemed to be saying. This involved identifying similarities in expression by reading through all the uncrossed lines i.e. those meaningful units (phrases and sentences) that had been identified from each account as relevant, and noting those that appeared to have a common thread running through or that seemed to be saying the same thing; and subsequently classing these into separate groups or clusters of meaning, based on similarities in what they were saying.

9. *Determining themes from clusters of meaning:* As I read through the clusters above, the themes or patterns of meaning emerging were clearly identifiable and these were subsequently noted and extricated.

10. *Writing a summary for each individual interview:* This step involved summarising each interview transcript in a short note, while taking care to preserve meaning within each of these

11. *Return to the participant with the summary and themes:* Due to difficulties with logistics and in many cases, issues with post-interview accessibility, it was not eventually possible to do this

12. *Identifying general and unique themes for all interviews* – in this, I categorised all themes in order of major and minor. Themes emerging from the more strongly populated clusters of meaning were classed as major themes, and those from the less populated ones were labelled ‘minor themes’. I equally took note of unique accounts that were seemingly variant and did not appear to fit in anywhere i.e. those for which I could find no clear patterns and that could not be specifically classified as a theme but were nonetheless relevant to the research question.

13. *Contextualization of themes:* In this, all themes were then examined against the backdrop of the context from which they had emerged. This was done by considering these alongside the marginal notes that I had made from reading and re-reading through the observation field notes from both cases.

14. *Composite Summary:* This step involved pulling all of the above together into a final summary or story of what was said. From this, further analysis and discussions subsequently flowed.

3.4.2 *Analysing Field Notes*

In processing field notes from observation, I tried to keep an eye for detail. In reading and re-reading my field notes, I began to get a sense of what appeared relevant and significant to the study, and I took note of these. Next, I proceeded to make marginal notes about these significant observations noted. As I did this, I scanned the data for recurrent patterns and again, tried to identify any emerging themes and whether these could be classed as major or minor. Bryman (2008) writes that ‘the themes and sub-themes are the product of a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data’ (p. 554). But on a more cautious note, he warns that despite its prominence as a means of processing qualitative data, thematic analysis lacks a clearly specified series of procedures and is more of an adaptable framework which may be applied as necessary.

3.4.3 Further Analysis

Having identified the various themes and sub-themes, I proceeded to examine these in the light of the postcolonial conceptual framework outlined in the literature review. In this, I had chosen to first of all apply a phenomenological and thematic analytical framework to data for reasons of clarity and rigour. To me, this seemed far more practicable to do because I felt I could better view the data through a postcolonial critique lens only after I had first apprehended its essence and meaning. As far as it was possible to do, I had made to bracket my own presuppositions, so as to allow the ‘voices’ of participants speak through the themes and sub-themes that had emerged and thereafter, I further examined these in light of the postcolonial arguments. Additionally, this was done to ensure a rigorous analytical process; given that a major criticism of qualitative research has

been with respect to maintaining rigour and validity in the course of knowledge creation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

3.5 The Study in Retrospect – Challenges and Limitations

Limitations to the study were experienced in my interactions with the organisations and these are outlined below.

3.5.1 Case 1 - YouthOrg

In this section, for reasons of confidentiality and due to a number of important ethical considerations, this first case has been anonymised and is hereinafter referred to as 'YouthOrg'.

The Organisation in question is a values-based, voluntary organisation for girls and young women. It was founded in the early nineteenth century and as at the time of this study, was only a few years away from its centenary anniversary. It is made up of over 140 member organisations spread out over five classified regions namely, Africa, Arab, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Western Hemisphere. As a global organisation, it seeks to provide opportunities for non-formal education through which young girls and women can develop life and leadership skills through the avenues of *self-development, challenge, and adventure*. Core to its agenda is the ambition to be 'the global voice of girls and young women', and to engage and empower young women so that they can live fulfilling lives and have a positive impact on their own communities. Chiefly, this organisation concerns itself with *leadership development, capacity-building and advocacy* which it primarily seeks to achieve through

- Non-formal education;
- Cross-Cultural experiences; and

- Inter-generational relationships

Recently, YouthOrg had commissioned what it described as a ‘world-class’ leadership development intervention, which it expected to cut across cultures and to eventually emerge as a benchmark and first port of call for future leadership development programmes. The Leadership Development Programmes specifically targeted the young women volunteers in its member organizations who would be directly responsible for leading the younger members as the organization moves towards achieving its strategic goals. However, in implementing this initiative, there had been a number of important questions for the management to consider, especially regarding pertinent issues of diversity and cultural complexity.

Access to this organisation was granted on the platform of an existing relationship it had with the University of Exeter Business School. Due to this relationship, entry was negotiated through several interactions with senior members of YouthOrg. They included face-to-face meetings, conversations by telephone and e-mail, as well as other forms of written formal communication.

Initially, the management of the organisation had stated that they were not oblivious to the possible challenges that were likely to be posed by the Leadership Development Programme (LDP), and had expressed their willingness to explore these and to work through them. Of particular interest to this researcher, was the likely challenge of cultural diversity, as programme participants were to be drawn from various cultures from all around the world. At the time, given the recent accusations of intellectual imperialism and ethnocentrism in knowledge creation, coupled with the growing criticisms of western theories of leadership in non-western – particularly African – contexts, it seemed sensible to question the

inherent assumption of 'universal applicability' as well as the possibilities of contextual fit. It was considered necessary that the LDP maintained a healthy awareness of this.

A major limitation to this study was with access to the programme. From the onset, YouthOrg did not appear to have a schedule of dates for the events; rather, these were to be arranged on an ad-hoc basis, with at least three major events in a year. It would then decide which of these was relevant for me to attend. What this meant was that it wasn't always possible for me to attend the learning events organised. Added to this was a certain degree of difficulty associated with procuring travel documents to attend international events outside the UK. I put this down to the fact that I held a non-British passport which would ordinarily not count in my favour, if I did not apply under the cover of the sponsoring organisation.

Another challenge had to do with tensions arising from my paradigmatic positioning. YouthOrg had openly expressed the desire that my study would help 'validate' the LDP. Upon seeking further clarification and from the discussions that ensued, it appeared that they were not only seeking research validation for this programme, but were also particularly interested in incorporating what was repeatedly referred to as 'latest' and 'cutting edge theory' into the fabric of the programme. It seemed that in this case, I was the academic (or assumed 'expert') who was expected to provide not just feedback on the learning sessions I attended, but also to supply 'cutting edge' theory for the programme. At this point, I struggled to maintain a

balance between my role as researcher on an exploration and that of the theoretical expert that I was required by the organisation to be.

For me, this seemed paradigmatically inconsistent. Here I was as inquirer, trying to make sense of all that was happening and seeking to explore the relevance of ‘western’ leadership paradigms to the non-western programme participant; and at the same time, being asked to recommend as ‘expert solutions’ the very theories that I sought to critically explore. Also, they had initially favoured an Action Research paradigm with a strong preference for appreciative inquiry, which understandably, was in line with the need for validation; nonetheless, with its conceptual framework hinged on postcolonial critique, this particular study called for a more critical perspective and again, this put me ‘on the spot’ paradigmatically. As near-novice researcher, it was a difficult position to be in. Here I was working and thinking from within the ambits of a critical framework, and at the same time being asked to supply the same functionalist paradigms whose scholarly repudiations had formed the basis for my inquiry. I wondered if this organisational theory-fetish was not inimical to the cause

As it turned out, YouthOrg was not too pleased with my methodological considerations and non-preference for Action Research/Appreciative Inquiry. Even though they continually *espoused* openness to critique, they *seemed* less inclined to a critical research perspective and on their own, proceeded to incorporate Appreciative Inquiry as a subject in one of the learning sessions.

Over time, they became less open to my agenda and access to participants was gradually restricted, which made further interviewing difficult. I also observed that management seemed quite protective of the LDP module material and it was

not easy to access these, and as can be seen from some of the observation field notes, programme participants had often complained about the unavailability of module materials. Up till that time, I had managed to carry out a number of interviews and now had about 15 participant interviews in all, in addition to detailed field notes. After due consideration, I wrapped up this inquiry and sought to progress to the next case.

3.5.2 Case 2 – Lagos Business School

My next port of call was the Lagos Business School (LBS), a leading business School in Nigeria. With a reach that spans the West Coast of Africa the Lagos Business School is affiliated with the IESE Business School in Spain, and has grown to become a force to be reckoned with in Corporate Nigeria and across much of West and East Africa. As a leading business school, LBS offers various executive coaching and leadership courses, as well as a very prestigious and highly coveted MBA programme.

At the time of seeking access to the school, preparations were already in motion for commencement of the leadership development module for the MBA cohort in February 2010. I was convinced that this would not only provide a practical, relevant and hopefully, a more accessible option for further data collection; but that it would also serve to broaden the data scope of this study, as well as provide a much stronger basis for further contextualisation of the research. Progressively, an opportunity to collect more data was negotiated with the school through the Executive Leadership Programme/MBA Co-ordinator.

The first step taken towards securing entry into the institution was one in which I moved to harness a previous contact, and build on the beginnings of an earlier

existing relationship. During a strategic conference on African Leadership and Management I had previously attended in Ghana, I managed to secure a valuable contact at the LBS, who incidentally, was also in attendance at this particular conference. This meeting marked the beginning of a sustained acquaintanceship, which ultimately proved to be a valuable link in gaining access to the Lagos Business School. Over the next few years, and during subsequent visits to the City of Lagos, Nigeria, I continued to build on the existing professional relationship, a move which served me in no small capacity later on in the future. As the time for the field study drew near, I sent an e-mail to my main contact, intimating her of my research intentions, and in her response, she assured me that the proposed study was quite a welcome possibility, and advised me on how to go about this. During the next few months, this process was continually enacted and finalised over subsequent e-mails and numerous telephone calls between Nigeria and the UK. In January 2010, the final dates for the MBA Leadership module at LBS were finally forwarded to me via e-mail.

Although, I was privileged to have this contact, I still had to fulfil the regular procedure of formally requesting access to the institution through the Programme Co-ordinator of the MBA, who reported to the Dean of the Business School. I was also advised to contact the main facilitator of Leadership module, in order to be allowed to attend and sit in on her classes with the MBA cohort. I complied with this requirement, and found that my formal request was processed in record time. About ten days to the module start date, the waited approval came through, and exactly a week later, I was off to Lagos Nigeria, to conduct this research at the Lagos Business School.

This was a long awaited opportunity that had finally materialised. Needless to say that at this point, I am concerned with contemporary leadership development programs which are reputedly international, but more often than not, have been developed in the West. This study explores the experiences of African participants on contemporary leadership development programmes and investigates the understandings of this that participants construct for themselves, particularly in the context that they live and within which they must apply the knowledge gained from such developmental initiatives. The next two chapters will present findings from each case study in greater detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTHORG

4.1 Background

This Case Study was conducted within the context of a gendered non-profit organisation for girls and young women. (To protect the identity and privacy of this organisation, as well as for other equally pertinent reasons, the name of this organisation is concealed; and will hereinafter be referred to as ‘YouthOrg’)

Founded in early twentieth century Britain, YouthOrg was set up to cater for the needs of girls and young women and at the time of this investigation, was barely a few months away from the celebration of its centenary anniversary. As a global association, it prides itself on being values-based, cross-cultural, and inter-generational, and espouses these three as its core organisational values. With an international geographical reach, the organisation is hosted by nearly every country in the world, and presently consists of over 140 member organisations (MOs) in total. These MOs are spread out over five classified world regions, namely – Africa, Arab, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Western Hemisphere.

4.2 Organisational Structure

Although run mostly independently, the organisation’s MOs are guided in their operations by a governing constitution. This constitution is administered by a governing council, which is fondly referred to as the ‘World Board’. Consisting primarily of volunteers drawn from within the various member organisations, the World Board is a democratically elected body that provides an oversight and policy-making function, and it is responsible for governing the activities of the organisation. In total, the Board consists of less than 20 members, with 5 of these

specifically elected as chair persons, each representing a separate world region. The World Headquarters or Bureau is based in London, and this is run by a number of Directors who all report to an organisational Chief Executive. The Bureau also employs other paid permanent staff.

At the MO level, there are women co-ordinators who specifically provide leadership and guidance to larger groups of young girls, through various activities such as training, personal development, and other organisational activities. Although a large number of these co-ordinators are young women between the ages of 18 – 30, there are also a number of relatively older women who are long standing members of the association, and have retained their membership till the present time. These not only serve as mentors to the younger women co-ordinators, but many of them also have an oversight function over particular world regions.

There are also a number of residential development centres where girls and young women can acquire life and leadership skills through self-development, the development of life skills, challenge and adventure, and these are referred to as 'World Centres'. There are currently four (4) world centres within this organisation, with one located in each of its global regions – Arab, Asia Pacific, Europe and Western Hemisphere. Africa, at present, is the only region that does not host a world centre. While the reasons for this were not particularly clear at the time of this investigation, this infrastructural gap was especially noted. *Why was there no world centre in Africa?* The seemingly cursory answer offered to this question was that there had been calls made for the citing of a world centre in Kenya; whether or not this is being considered, and at what level of priority, is yet to be clarified.

Presently, each world centre offers facilities for lodging, training and developmental activities for girls and young women. The centres are financially supported by a group called ‘friends of the four world centres’, and each centre also derives additional funding from the hosting services it provides for seminars and conferences, as well as to lodgers, travellers and other activity groups for a fee, at different times of the year. Essentially, these are seen as ‘international gathering places’ at which international co-operation and global friendships are formed, and learning resorts at which various programmes and values-based training on leadership, life skills, citizenship and advocacy are also offered. In addition, the centres serve as venues for a World Conference that is hosted by the Organisation every three years. At this prestigious conference, various policy issues and other relevant matters arising are discussed. The World Conference is hosted in turn by each region at its world centre; in the case of Africa without a world centre, a suitable venue is usually selected to host this global event.

4.3 The Organisation – Aims and Objectives

As a global organisation, it seeks to provide opportunities for non-formal education through which young girls and women can develop life and leadership skills through the avenues of *self-development*, *challenge*, and *adventure*. Core to its agenda is the ambition to be ‘the global voice of girls and young women’, and to engage and empower young women so that they can live fulfilling lives and have a positive impact on their own communities. Chiefly, this organisation concerns itself with *leadership development*, *capacity-building* and *advocacy* which it primarily seeks to achieve via

- Non-formal education

- Cross-cultural experiences
- Inter-generational relationships

The above could be understood as the central tenets fundamental to the development of the members of YouthOrg. Through building on this framework, it appears to have succeeded in influencing many young minds. This is evidenced by some of the testimonials published on its website, which include comments from all over the world. For instance, Mary Lawson (not real name), a young member from Grenada, makes the following point:

“It is good that young women can speak out freely especially on issues that are affecting them...”

Further comments also include:

“We are the future leaders of the world. Thank you for giving us a voice... to share our views...” (S. M., USA)

“Wonderful. It is great to have a voice as a young woman in our world. I'm so glad...” (Unnamed member, Canada)

4.4 The YouthOrg Leadership Development Programme (YLDP)

The programme had been developed in response to a number of challenges confronting the organisation. These had ranged from what was seen as a lack of co-ordination and decision-making ability to issues of declining membership.

In its capacity as a values-based world-wide movement, the organisation had as one of its foremost concerns, the task of ensuring uniformity and maintaining what it referred to as acceptable standards of practice within its member organisations. In this, it sought to achieve a level playing field across the board because it considered this fundamental to its emergence both as a global voice and

as a force to be reckoned with. in the development of society. Such development was expected to be achieved through the positive actions of its member girls and young women worldwide.

However, in the face of such noble intentions were equally pertinent challenges. For instance, senior members of the organisation had observed that a number of the young women co-ordinators in some of its MOs, particularly in the African nations, tended to struggle in their roles as chief commissioners for their country. This was further exacerbated by the fact that MOs varied in size and in the resources available to them. As such, they believed that there was something of an unequal playing field, characterised by a high dependency on the parent body by the smaller MOs, an absence of adequate decision-making structures, and a gradual decline in membership, to mention a few key issues. Furthermore, although some of these MOs had their own local training programmes already, these senior members believed that there was some variability in the quality and infrastructure of these when compared with their counterparts in the more well-endowed MOs. Therefore, it was felt that such a situation could hinder the much desired organisational progression to world-class standards, as well as the advancement of YouthOrg's standing and repute on a global stage.

Subsequently, the Directors of the organisation identified a lack of competent leadership as a key contributing factor. It was felt that leadership skills were lacking across the member organisations, particularly in the Africa region, in which MOs were believed to be operating below acceptable standards of practice. It was also thought that proper leadership training was necessary to level the unequal playing field between these and their counterparts in the other regions. The subsequent response to this was to commission the design and development of a

global leadership programme which would be known as ‘the YouthOrg Leadership Development Programme (YLDP)’.

The task of designing this learning intervention was contracted to an academic consultant, also a member of the organisation in the Europe region and who would develop the overall structure and content of the modules. Progressively, a Resource Team (RT) was formed to assist the programme developer. They were charged with the on-going development of the YLDP and with generating more theoretical content to further populate the modules.

To deliver the programme, a pool of facilitators was drawn from various organisational sub-regions and these were trained at the World Bureau in London; where they were introduced to the YLDP material and engaged with the required learning techniques in preparation for the delivery of the programme. Thereafter, facilitators were randomly selected to facilitate various modules at each subsequent YLDP learning event with programme participants in attendance.

In the short-term, this initiative was geared towards building leadership capacity across the regions and it specifically targeted the young women volunteers in its MOs, who were directly responsible for leading the younger girls, even as the organisation moved towards achieving its goals. A longer-term objective of this initiative was to achieve a highly evolved leadership development programme that would ultimately serve as a future bench-mark for other leadership development initiatives, particularly in relation to non-profit international organisations. Thus, the YLDP was seen as a world-class leadership development intervention that would expectedly reach across cultures and eventually emerge as the global

standard and first port of call for all such future leadership development programmes.

However, there were a number of significant questions posed by such an ambition, and the need to unpack and explore some of the issues raised therein is what subsequently gave birth to this case study. As a first step in that direction, it was necessary to highlight some of the underlying assumptions of this intervention, and these were

- That the need for a centralised leadership development programme would be accepted by all of the MOs;
- That such a leadership development programme would be appropriate and applicable across all MOs, despite cultural and contextual differences;
- That such a programme would be effective in its aim to develop both individual and collective leadership capacity.

Due to its intended global span, it was necessary to carefully consider the above assumptions, particularly if the initiative was to prove effective in developing leadership capacity among young women volunteers positioned in different contexts. Indeed, it seemed sensible to question the inherent assumption of ‘universality’ and again, the possibilities of contextual fit. A critical appraisal of the programme would be necessary to maintain awareness around such issues, both conceptually and in practice.

Furthermore, an equally significant challenge concerned the question of intellectual imperialism and accusations of euro-centrism in knowledge creation and the propoundment of leadership theory (Jones, 2006; Bolden & Kirk, 2005; Obiakor, 2004; and Blunt & Jones, 1997). For instance, one of the fundamental issues that appeared essentially problematic within this, was the implicit conceptualisation and indeed, the seemingly taken-for-granted notion of ‘world-class’. A pertinent question to consider in this regard was ‘*what exactly was world-class, who defined it, and by what or whose standards was this defined?*’ It was particularly crucial that proponents of the proposed intervention carefully took this into account, particularly in the wake of these criticisms of western theories of leadership.

4.5 Framing the Inquiry

As researcher, my intention was to explore the above challenges in greater detail. Considering that this was a large global organisation with an over 140-country strong membership, it was imperative that I narrowly defined the research scope very early on. Since my research interests were shaped primarily by theoretical conceptualisations of intellectual imperialism arising from postcolonial criticisms of ‘western’ knowledge and colonial representations of the ‘other’, I had resolved to approach the study from this perspective. This meant that I would be especially concerned with the ‘other’ side of things. That is, my focus would be to study participants from non-western MOs who were enrolled on the programme. But again, I would still need to further narrow the scope of my inquiry; because even though the member organisations spanned five continental regions – three of which were located outside the west and could therefore be classified as non-

western, this research had a major focus on engagement with leadership development in a pre-defined study context of African society, therefore it followed that I would be more concerned with exploring the experiences of participants from within the Africa region.

My reasons for this choice were both personal and strategic. First, I am African and it goes without saying that I am naturally inclined to stay in what could be considered my 'social comfort zone'. Indeed, a key purpose of any inquiry is to generate quality information and I reasoned that it would be less challenging to access information from the African respondents. This in no way implied partiality or racial discrimination of any sort; rather it simply meant that at the time, I felt that there would be fewer socio-ethnic and communication barriers to break in the course of data collection.

Secondly, and from an even more strategic perspective of access, I imagined that the African participants who were mostly resident outside the UK, (where the organisation's World Bureau is located and from which many of the events were organized), might be more relaxed in relating with the ethnically familiar. This meant that possibly, they would be less guarded in their conversations and more inclined to 'flow', which inadvertently, would improve the quality and depth of the data I could gather.

Having settled on the research audience, I proceeded to work with the following questions in mind.

- I. One of the core values espoused by the organisation was that of being *cross-cultural*. Therefore, a key question for me would be to ascertain the

degree to which this was reflected in this Global Leadership Development Programme, particularly in its content, in its processes and methodology, as well as in the over-arching organisational approach to its implementation. As its name connotes, *was it really acknowledging of global cultural realities, or did it merely present a one-sided 'ethnocentric' worldview?*

- II. How 'universally applicable' was this developmental initiative as it was being rolled out before different countries, societies, and cultures; i.e. *did it give due consideration to questions of diversity and was there or not a danger of intellectual imperialism?* If so, what were the implications for the design and implementation of the initiative, and for the organisation's own aims, given its values-base?
- III. Given this, what were the challenges and complexities that arose in the course of the intervention? That is, what kinds of responses and feedback did the programme engender; did participants respond with acceptance, rejection, withdrawal etc.?
- IV. How effective would this programme be in developing leadership capacity within the organisation, particularly among the African participants?

4.6 Conducting the Research

This case study adopted a mostly exploratory approach (Yin, 2009) and data was collected mainly through *observation* and *interviews*.

4.6.1 *By Observation*

The leadership development programme was deployed primarily through ‘learning events’. During the period of this study, four major events were organized, with three of these held at the World Bureau in London, and the fourth at a World Centre located in the Alpine Village of Adelboden, Switzerland.

Observation was carried out during each of these events which ran over an eighteen-month period, with each event lasting anywhere between 7 to 10 days. A typical study day spanned a period of 13 – 14 hours, split across sessions. On each of these days, I sat in the classrooms during sessions and observed the proceedings, making notes of these as I went along.

At these events, participants were all women and were drawn from an average of 40 different countries from around the world at a single event and typically, these seminars had an age band of 18 – 30 years old for all programme participants. The learning sessions were very intense, with various activities packed into them; typical learning day would start at 7:30am and conclude at 9pm. In this, I observed not just the more explicit elements of course content, facilitation and module delivery, but more importantly, how participants were engaging with the programme and how they were receiving and responding to what was being taught. Afterwards, from 9:15pm daily, the Planning Committee would then meet to review the day’s activities and this would continue up till about 11:30 or midnight. Again, I sat in on these meetings and observed the proceedings.

4.6.2 Conducting Interviews

A total of seventeen interviews were conducted over the course of the first three events of which fifteen were with the African participants. The two others interviewed were both senior staff members of the organisation who helped provide a detailed background of the organisation as well as the story of events leading up to the design and delivery of the LDP. The African delegates were selected randomly from all over the continent and some of the countries represented here include – Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, The Republic of Benin, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Due to an extremely busy programme schedule, interviews were mostly conducted during the in-between periods when participants were free to speak, and due to time constraints could not exceed 30 minutes. As was hoped, the respondents were quite happy to speak and were open to share their experiences and feelings over the course of the event. Although the interviews could not have been longer for want of time, I found that they were concise and insightful, leading me to believe that they still captured important data.

Besides the two senior organisational members, all the respondents were young women aged between 18 and 25 years old and for reasons of confidentiality, their identities have been made anonymous and coded. Both senior organisational members have been coded as SM001 and SM002 respectively. The table below displays the coded identities and demographics of the African participants interviewed.

Table 4.1 YouthOrg Respondents at a Glance

No.	Participant Code	Country	Gender	Age Range
1	CS1001	Burundi	Female	18-25
2	CS1002	Ghana	Female	18-25
3	CS1003	Kenya	Female	18-25
4	CS1004	Liberia	Female	18-25
5	CS1005	Malawi	Female	18-25
6	CS1006	Nigeria	Female	18-25
7	CS1007	Rwanda	Female	18-25
8	CS1008	The Republic of Benin	Female	18-25
9	CS1009	Sierra-Leone	Female	18-25
10	CS1010	South Africa	Female	18-25
11	CS1011	Tanzania	Female	18-25
12	CS1012	Uganda	Female	18-25
13	CS1013	Zaire	Female	18-25
14	CS1014	Zambia	Female	18-25
15	CS1015	Zimbabwe	Female	18-25

Due to a number of what seemed like political reasons, interview access to participants became increasingly monitored and gradually restricted after this time and as a result of this, there were no further interviews conducted at the fourth event. Nevertheless, data collection through observation was maintained.

Interview data was processed primarily through a phenomenological analytical framework and the emergent themes were identified and extracted. Thematic Analysis was equally conducted on observation field notes, and these were closely compared with results from the interview data. The phenomenological aspect of analysis was to enable me understand participant experience and to see things as participants saw them. This is because a fundamental underpinning of phenomenology is its pre-occupation with experience, as well as with the extrication of meaning and of essence.

The next few paragraphs present themes from the findings and examine these in the light of the theoretical frameworks that have shaped the research. It also considers some of the implications that the results might have for leadership development within and beyond the context of this organisation.

4.7 Findings and Analysis

Findings from interview and observation field data are presented within the first part of this section including the key themes that have emerged. The succeeding paragraphs present three main strands of analysis – first, a pedagogical critique of the programme including its structure and content; next, I present an analysis of leadership development within the organisation, particularly in respect of the dichotomy between leader and leadership development; and lastly this section advances a postcolonial critique of learning in YouthOrg as well as of the organisational aims.

4.7.1 Non-completion of Pre-seminar Assignments

During the interviews conducted, it emerged that most of the African delegates had not completed their individual pre-seminar assignments prior to this time. Upon further inquiry, it seemed that many had not understood them and as such, were not quite able to follow through on them during the formal classroom sessions. Furthermore, it emerged during the analysis of interview data that participants' inability to understand some of the metaphors used in the pre-module material was a key contributor to this. Below, I present some excerpts from the interviews.

'In the pre-seminar assignments, what I didn't really understand was 'the tool kit'. When I got here, they said it's what you are going to use to get to the top...that is what your tool kit should be. What I didn't understand was because they said you have to carry it along..., so I felt it was going to be some kind of structure, as in maybe in engineering work' – (Participant CS1004)

'The title 'Peak Experience' I didn't understand it, and I also consulted with one of the young ladies here... my friend, but she also didn't understand it. But I just wrote something brief. But what I thought and what they later explained were kind of different' – (Participant CS1002)

'Yeah... especially when it was talking about my gear... In my country when you say 'gear', it is the rate at which you walk. And so I was thinking, in my peak experiences, I need to set the rate at which I need to walk... And when I received the e-mail from Alice, she was like 'these are the equipment you need to take along', and I was like 'Oh!' – (Participant CS1009)

4.7.2 Participant Withdrawal and Resignation

Another relevant theme that emerged from the interview data was a visibly resigned attitude shown by some African participants. This was also reflected in the noticeably silent withdrawal of this group in the classroom sessions. The interview data showed that many members of this group felt left behind during the sessions and as such unable to follow through on most of the discussions. Some of the responses included

'It still boils down to the fact that we don't understand so many things. At a point, it was like we were just moving with the tide. It was like 'this is where they asked us to go, so this is where we're going'. – (Participant CS1006)

'Maybe we could have had some idea about what is going to happen in this one... what we are going to learn...as in 'this is how the sessions are going to run... Though they gave us the time table, but we still needed some background information as in materials, maybe...like some of these things we are learning in class, like this Maslow's theory, systemic thinking, and all that, they could have given us ahead of time. Maybe we could have gone into libraries, read about it more, before coming here. Because we would have been able to actually speak about it, contribute more in class discussions, because it's like I'm hearing all these theories now for the first time, and I didn't even know such things exist. Serious..., I think those things just exist in class...maybe in universities and stuff like that.' – (Participant CS1015)

'I got the impression that those who were going to use the module should be of a certain academic standard. I think it needs to be 'simplified'. Those theories should be simplified in our own ways in order for us to understand. So that it's not like you need a degree to understand or use them'. – (Participant CS1007)

4.7.3 Infrastructural Gap in Africa Region

Furthermore, there appeared to be other important issues emerging. From the responses, the notable absence of a world centre in Africa, as well as the inability of the organisation to host a world training event on the continent last year, were major contributing factors to the Africans' perceptions.

It's like they get much of the information, maybe because they have much of the board members in their countries and stuff like that, so they get much of the information. I don't think Africans are really that represented among their board members, because if they are really represented, then we Africans should be getting enough feedback. Like this centenary celebration, it's just like...I think they said the UK is planning it. It's like 'can't Africa plan? Is it just going to be UK, or it's going to be Europe this and that?' Somebody was just telling me that she was actually disappointed when they said they were not going to hold this seminar in Kenya again. Yes, there was unrest in Kenya, but it's long been settled, so why couldn't they still hold it there and just shift it to this date now? Why did they have to move it up here? Because it's like we Africans are just being left out of the whole thing. I really want them to get more Africans into this. – (Participant CS1006)

From the above, it is not especially clear if this silence had as much to do with the programme content, as much as it did with other organisational contextual issues like the afore-mentioned. Nevertheless, what came across particularly strong during the classroom sessions was this habitual withdrawal on the part of the African delegates. When compared with their African counterparts, the Asian delegates were also noticeably quiet in class sessions, but the difference was that these took a particularly active role during group projects. However, their African peers seemed quiet both in class and on the group projects. While it is possible to attribute this to a naturally quiet or reserved nature on the part of some, the fact that they were largely outspoken during the interviews and especially vibrant in the hostels seemingly defeated the logic of such a proposition. Indeed, the question of why the Africans were silent for most of the formal learning sessions was a most pertinent one to consider. This is discussed in a subsequent section.

4.8 A Pedagogical Critique of the LDP – Evaluating Effectiveness

4.8.1 Evaluating Programme Structure

The leadership development programme was mainly implemented through a structural framework of groups – the *Planning Team* and the *Patrol System*.

The *Patrol* is the fundamental unit of volunteering activity within this organisation. It is basically part of the organisational language and rhetoric and it simply refers to a group of 6 – 8 participants who have been drafted to form a team. All forms of learning activity was dispensed through this structural framework, and from the beginning of each event, well before they arrive, participants had been pre-assigned to their respective patrols. At each of the sessions and for the duration of the event, everyone was expected to engage with

and experience the learning within their patrols. Although there were no set criteria for choosing patrols, care was usually taken by the planning team to ensure that members of each patrol were as racially diverse as possible. Where possible, each patrol had a representative from each world region, depending on the demographic structure and number of attendees from each region per event.

The *Planning Team* for each event was comprised of senior and junior facilitators who had been selected from all five world regions of the organisation. Although a larger number of its members varied from one event to the next, there were a few members of the team who had been consistently on board for all of the events conducted during this period of field study. These included the in-house module developer, the programme director, programme co-ordinator and a few eminent members of the seemingly prestigious World Board. There did appear to be a sense of something akin to awe expressed by members of the organisation whenever reference was made to the world board. It is possible that this might have been due to a long standing tradition of hierarchy within the organisation. People tended to relate to the mention and matters of the board with a muted hint of reverence, or what you could call a silent mix of admiration and of fear. The Planning Team was responsible for the logistics and organising of each event, and they met every night to track the general progress of things. They also doubled as module facilitators, having been trained at a pre-programme facilitators' training seminar. Such seminars were regularly organised to equip would-be facilitators and develop a facilitator pool from which planning team members /facilitators for future events could be drawn. Facilitators' ages could range from anywhere between 18 – 70 years old, a practice that seemed to lend credence to the

organisation's espousal of *Inter-generational*. There were women of different ages within this broad range, some of these were much older than the rest and had been members of the organisation for decades, many from their girlhood/early adulthood. On the surface, there appeared a sense of oneness among these women, but a slightly closer look revealed pockets of distance between them.

Although there was the general air of friendliness and warmth in the room, I observed that there was also the tendency for people to cling to others from their own region, most of whom they were meeting for the very first time. Also, the older women tended to stick together as they most certainly may have found elements of common interest or shared history among themselves; on the other hand, the younger ones mostly hung around one another. So even though there were undoubtedly inter-generational representations within these groups, there was observably a trans-generational gap within the organisation. I believe that it is necessary to mention this at this point, considering that one of the present challenges this organisation was faced with, part of which also led to the development of the programme, was the issue of declining membership. Despite the fact that it appeared an inter-generational organisation, in terms of general non-learning interaction, there did not seem to be very much in common between the younger and older women, save for shared organisational norms and practices e.g. games, puzzles and songs. There was this noticeable gap between younger and older which I could not immediately articulate. But in a few days over the course of interviewing, I was helped out by a respondent who remarked

'Back home, we really don't do much...although we are always having regular meetings, but there's not much interaction between the older women and the younger ones. Many of the women leaders are teachers and they mostly want to teach us how to sew and keep house; but what we really want is different. Many of us have career ambitions... some of us want to be lawyers, others want to be IT engineers. We want to see women like these who have made it in their professional careers...to help us and to inspire us, not just teach us how to cook and sew' – (Participant CS115)

This participant wasn't alone in her views. During her interview, another young woman pointedly stated

'in my own MO, all the older women do is that they just call everybody together for meetings from time to time, and for them... they'll just be cooking and eating. There's not much really going on among the younger ones... many people are just leaving...' (Participant CS106)

What the above statements seem to connote is that contrary to its own espousal, the organisation, though demographically inter-generational, was not quite in sync with the younger generation in terms of its needs and expectations. Indeed, there might have been a time when cooking, sewing and housekeeping were considered crucial to girlhood/womanhood, but this did not seem to be the case at this time. As the young lady remarked 'many of us have career ambitions', and as it is, although cooking and housekeeping may be important, these were not necessarily considered a present priority in the life-skills requirement for this young lady.

Was this organisation, though demographically consisting of different generations, socially failing to transcend the times? Was it caught up in an era from which its young had moved and were still moving on? Here was a situation where the continued relevance of the organisation's aims to the needs of the younger and perhaps more 'modern' woman, was fundamentally being questioned and challenged. Indeed, while this is not so much a 'bad' thing, because it presents a useful opportunity for organisational development, particularly as a diagnostic framework that can really begin to address the problem of membership decline; it can also be viewed as a 'red flag', one that bears major implications for the continued sustainability of the organisation, beyond this turn of its first century.

Again, what did this mean for leadership development within the organisation? Ladkin et al (2007) suggest that for it to be effectual, leadership development must first of all be relevant to its intending user? If indeed there was already a tension and generational non-transcendence of this kind between the older generation and the younger women whom they supposedly mentored, then it is pertinent to question just how effective the current intervention was being at developing leadership capacity on a broader organisational level; especially considering that role modelling is believed to be an important part of leadership development. However, it appears the importance of role models was not entirely lost on the organisation, as there was a session in which photographs of potential role models were showcased. In this, pictures of eminent personalities like Hilary Clinton, Nelson Mandela (noticeably the very first open reference to Africa), Naomi Campbell, Tony Blair and the like, were showcased in a 'walking gallery'. This

gallery consisted of the participants themselves, to whose backs poster photographs of the above were pasted.

4.8.2 Evaluating Programme Delivery

The actual classroom learning was split into sessions, and there were two of these per day; the morning and afternoon sessions, with a lunch break in between. Each session was further punctuated by a 30 minute tea break. The programme was basically structured around eight (8) modules namely – Understanding Leadership, Personal Development, Leading teams, Management Skills, Diversity, Communication, Advocacy, and Setting Direction. Although there were eight modules in all, each event would normally accommodate three modules. This in itself posed some difficulty because no set of programme participants was ever the same. That is, for each event, there was a different set of people. The implication therefore was that the participants who attended the different events were not always exposed to the same content, but got to experience another set of three modules, and as such, an entirely different learning content. A likely fall-out of this was that it could potentially undermine the organisational objective of ‘ensuring uniformity’. This is because if people were not equally exposed to the entire programme set, then it meant that they went away with only ‘a part’ of the total package intended for overall organisational leadership development. For instance, if one set of attendees went away with knowledge about *Understanding Leadership, Advocacy and Personal Development*, another set would be trained on *Communication, Management Skills and Setting Direction*. Neither of these two groups would be exposed to knowledge about *Diversity and Leading Teams*. This meant that there would therefore be a knowledge gap between these two groups of

people; who were expected to go back and apply the knowledge gained to their own local organisations. This was likely to bring about a situation in which there would be different people, applying different skill sets, in various national and MO contexts. To me as direct observer, this seemed like a recipe more suited to chaos than it was to uniformity.

Furthermore, there was no set criteria for choosing which set of modules to teach at the events, but it appeared that this was done on an 'as is' basis; that is, modules were offered as pre-determined by the programme director. The modules were comprised of formal learning theories, games and puzzles, and a bit of outdoor activity. There was a lot of singing and clapping occurring throughout the sessions as well, and it seemed as though these were themselves steeped in organisational tradition and intended as part of non-formal learning activity. There was equally a heavy use of metaphors, and it was not uncommon to hear metaphoric expressions like *the iceberg of isolation* and the *desert of poverty*. Before each event, a pre-seminar assignment was sent out to participants by e-mail. This was to prepare them for the event and also to get them thinking in line with its focus. They were each expected to complete the tasks and bring along the completed work to the events.

Another important observation made with respect to the learning delivery was the visible recourse to formal training methods. Although there was a consistent reiteration of *non-formal education* as a core organisational value, the programme was considerably structured in what could clearly be considered a traditional classroom model. It comprised eight formal learning modules, and although it did

actually incorporate a number of informal activities, most of these were in the form of puzzles or games. All of the above, when taken together, merely served to convey a workshop-type learning model, which could still be classed as formal because it mostly involved the use of structured classroom learning. This finding is consistent with the Kelly et al (2006) observation that in spite of several attempts to broaden it as a researchable phenomenon, leadership development in practice was still mainly characterised by traditionalist recourse to structured learning modules; inadvertently designed as pre-packaged solutions geared towards solving a pre-determined problem. In this case, it seemed that the learning intervention in question had been adopted by the organisation as its very own 'packaged' solution in response to the pre-determined problem of 'under-developed leadership capacity'. Additionally and as a long term plan, it was equally planning to market this programme as a 'solution' to the future leadership development needs of other voluntary organisations.

A further observation made as regards programme delivery was with respect to the module materials. In addition to the fact that they were closely guarded, a close examination of these revealed a somewhat incoherent arrangement. Aside from the fact that there were quite a number of theoretical definitions, there seemed to be no clear logical sequence of thought progression beyond these, rather this looked to me more like a cluster of relevant theories. In addition, there were a large number of multiple choice questions, which did not appear to have much correlation with the theoretical frameworks advanced. A lot of the time, sessions were broken up for participants to engage in solving one puzzle or the other and group reflection was considered an important part of the learning. Upon further

observation, it emerged that the learning modules were still being updated with more theories and as such, the programme content was yet to be completely outlined. This was expressed in the following responses from the programme directors;

'The material is still being developed'

'The LDP is still evolving'

Although they did mention that 'we are constantly soliciting feedback and advice in order to help enrich the material'; but the question as to which of these was actually being used – i.e. *participant feedback* or *expert advice* – was not exactly clarified. Nevertheless, this approach mirrored an impression of flexibility, and indicated a willingness to make the process as interactive and engaging as possible for participants.

Be that as it may, and as much as this might have implied an openness and readiness to incorporate new views, there was no clear indication as to whether or not it could possibly include alternative ways of thinking about leadership; for instance, the *ubuntu* philosophy of leadership (Mphahlele, 2002; Mbigi, 2005). While there might be no clear way of establishing this, it was pertinently observed that there were frequently repeated calls for 'cutting edge' theory that would reflect the 'latest thinking'. Apart from the fact that this inferred that there was indeed a 'latest' way of thinking, going by subsequent statements from the programme organizers (*see below*), the issue of where this was expected to be

found, seemed an especially problematic one. Although there were 'suggestion papers' or 'parking lots' pasted around the room for participants' comments and suggestions, there was very little evidence that these served more than an aesthetic purpose.

Again, the idea that there were latest and cutting-edge theories which could be readily added to the existing material suggested that if eventually found, such theories were likely to be adopted uncritically, and possibly used as functionalist prescriptive tools with little consideration for issues of cultural diversity or contextual relevance. This further cast shadows on the expected effectiveness of this leadership development programme itself; since the effectiveness of any such intervention is invariably linked to the need for it to be contextually grounded, particularly in terms of its relevance and recognisability by the intending user. This is because 'participants learn that the valuable knowledge about leading is that which they construct for themselves, in the context in which they operate and with those who they lead' (Ladkin et al, 2007; p. 27).

In speaking of context, it is arguable that in this case, it might indeed refer to that of the broader organisational one, particularly since this was a global association with nearly a hundred years of its existence. That is, the various MOs could be considered as 'branches' of the same organisation, sharing the same organisational contextual and cultural frameworks, regardless of the fact that they were dispersed throughout the world. However,

it is equally necessary to state that in terms of daily administration, the MOs were to some extent independent of the World Bureau and this meant that they were also relatively free to function as active members of their own local societies

without any strict recourse to the headquarters. Furthermore, it can be argued that even though the MOs were members of a parent organisation, they could not be socially divorced from the locality in which they functioned, mainly because membership was comprised solely of the indigenous peoples with their own indigenous culture and ways of being. As such, despite having the same organisational roots, MOs could be said to function as social entities within their own cultural societies. It is in light of this that context in this case is primarily adopted as a cultural one. Against this backdrop, it is subsequently noted that in the quest for 'latest' and 'cutting edge theory', there seemed to be very little consideration for contextual relevance, not to mention any implicit or explicit allusion to familiarity or recognisability. This runs contrary to the notion that for leadership development to be considered teachable and transferable, it should *resonate with participants' experiences*; that is, it should be embodied in a concrete and recognizable form to those who must practice it (Kelly et al, 2006; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). In this case, it was not especially clear how recognisable or familiar such new and cutting edge theories would be to the participants in question, who observably for most of the sessions had remained silent.

4.8.3 Leader or Leadership Development?

A further pertinent question concerned the primary focus of development. As the programme unfolded, there seemed to be a conflict as to whether this learning intervention was geared fundamentally towards achieving leader or leadership development. However, there was evidence of a closer leaning towards the former. Indeed, much of the programme content material appeared underpinned

by a single person orientation, bordering largely on self development and emphasizing individualist notions of *self-knowledge* and *self-awareness*. An example of this was found in the Understanding Leadership module. In the section, *Me as a leader*, participants were asked to reflect on the *qualities* of a leader and how this might define ‘me as a leader’. This approach suggests more of a bearing towards the individual than the collective, and seemingly rests on the assumption that there are certain qualities that a *leader* should possess in order to be so regarded. In light of the leader/leadership development and integration/differentiation dichotomy (Hall and Seibert, 1992), there is more evidence to suggest that this programme was inclined more towards leader development as it seemed to be more tilted towards the building of individual competencies. This is further mirrored by statements such as

‘This event over the next few days, is designed to bring out the lion in you’ and

‘How do you see yourself as a leader?’

(Emphases is mine)

If indeed leadership development is explained in terms of the developing of social capital and harnessing collective potential, particularly through the building of inter-personal exchange, networks and relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Whitener, 2001), then it follows that a greater leaning towards self development would likely undermine any organisational intentions or efforts to the contrary. Again, what this implies in respect of the overall programme effectiveness is necessary to consider.

4.9 A Postcolonial Critique of ‘Knowing’ in YouthOrg – *Between Ethnocentrism and Universalism*

Another important point to consider was with respect to the content designed for the programme itself. The modules had been developed in Europe and though the organisation espouses 3 official languages – English, French, and Spanish, all of which were fundamentally European as well as colonial – the modules had been presented only in the English language. This seemed contrary to the organisational espousal of cross-culturalism, particularly due to the fact that less than half of the participants were from native English speaking countries, and although a number of African participants were from French and English Colonies, they were not all native English speakers.

Secondly, all of the theoretical frameworks employed and engaged within the modules, appeared to originate mainly from the stables of American and European scholarship, or what you could call the western hemisphere. Many of these were prescriptive in nature, and could as such be termed ‘western functionalist paradigms’ (Blunt and Jones, 1997). They included Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943), De Bono’s Theory of Hats (1985), Gardener’s Learning Intelligences (1987); to mention a few. These were not only advanced prescriptively, but were relatively individualist in focus and orientation, as they mostly emphasized the understanding and development of ‘self’, as well as the ontology of being and becoming a successful leader.

As previously noted, there was the seemingly insatiable appetite for ‘more theories’, which in my personal comprehension, I have subsequently termed a

theory-fetish. These sustained calls for ‘cutting edge theories that would reflect the latest thinking’ were increasingly sought so that they could be added to enrich the programme material. This was noticeably in tandem with the constantly expressed desire by the organisation to ‘validate’ the programme; through a sound theoretical frame-working and embedding of its content, as well as through a recognized academic affiliation. In this however, there was the notion that the more theoretically embedded the programme content was, and the more closely associated it was with academia, then the more ‘authentic’ and ‘valid’ it would appear. Apart from the fact that the programme content developer (also an organisational member) had been contracted from a European University, this agenda was further mirrored in utterances like

‘We would like for you to research and tell us about the latest cutting edge leadership theories’

‘We expect that your research would validate the LDP’

‘We are working in very close association with other members of Exeter University’ (SM001; Emphasis is mine)

I believe that these expectations directly stemmed from the longer term objective of evolving a ‘world-class leadership development programme which would provide a benchmark for all future programmes’, and apparently, the observed theory-fetish was especially critical to attaining this goal. Nevertheless, while this ambition itself did not immediately pose an issue, what seemed particularly problematic in itself was the organisation’s conceptualization of world class; and this is what I now proceed to unpack in the subsequent section.

4.9.1 A World-Class Programme

In light of the research findings, it can therefore be argued that in this case, ‘world class’ was synonymous with *western*; and this is consistent with the postcolonial criticisms of the universalizing tendency of western knowledge (Dutton et al, 1998; Ponzanesi, 2007), that systematically privileges and recognizes a particular world-view as the mainstream.

In this particular study, it follows that the quest for latest and cutting-edge theory was geared invariably towards the making of a programme that would ultimately be advanced as ‘world-class’, because possibly, *the more cutting-edge theory we have, the more world class the programme will be considered*. However, the question was *where* this latest thinking was expected to come from. Findings suggest that expectedly, these to come from the west (i.e. UK and America). The appointment of a European programme developer, the constant references and assurances of being in partnership with the UK academy, and the glaring absence of African representation on the resource team, are some of the notable evidences that appear to support this claim. It seems that in the bid to enrich the programme content and subsequently achieve a world class programme, these collectively represented the ‘direction’ to which the organisational leadership turned.

4.9.2 Defining ‘Acceptable Standards’ of Practice

Furthermore at this point, it is necessary to recall that a major challenge that precipitated the development of this intervention was one of ‘ensuring uniformity and maintaining *acceptable standards of practice* within its member organisations

(MOs)'. In this case, its member organisations, particularly those in the Africa region, were judged as 'not meeting standards', and there was deemed to be variability in the quality and infrastructure of local training programmes. In thinking about this, it is needful to consider the question of what exactly these standards were. That is, *what* really were 'acceptable standards of practice' within this organisation and again, *who* defined them?

It has been said that knowledge is contextual and consequently, a cultural contingent (Hamilton and Bean, 2005). It is further argued that such contextual knowledge is what shapes a society's values, norms and expectations of what is considered acceptable (Hofstede, 1980). If we consider the recent organisational actions as discussed in the preceding section, there is the notion that the scholarly views now so critically sought, would help to strengthen the programme content and ultimately satisfy the organisational aims of this learning intervention. Indeed, it is apparent that this 'latest thinking' or theoretical perspectives were needed to ground and continually shape the focus of leadership development within this organisation through the programme material, so that in the end, it could achieve its objective of a world class programme. That is, such knowledge frameworks would expectedly inform this learning intervention and thus provide a theoretical 'direction' towards achieving leadership development. Noticeably, these were the ideological perspectives that would now 'speak' to the YouthOrg Leadership Development Programme (YLDP); and arguably, define the 'acceptable standards' that the MOs were ultimately expected to meet.

If we consider the fact that all of the theoretical views employed so far have come primarily from the stables of Anglo-American scholarship, there is little doubt as

to *who* defines the standards. I argue that these theoretical frameworks are the ‘powerful voices’ (Grint, 2005) that articulate the standards to which the MOs in question have not been achieving, and so, must now attain. I believe that the observed uncritical organisational recourse to these knowledge frameworks reasonably justifies this claim.

Further support for this can also be found in such open references as

‘We are working in very close association with other members of Exeter University’ (SM001)

Again, this is not unusual in itself, as it is possible that this intellectual collaboration was done more for reasons of accessibility, as a result of geographical proximity. For instance, it could be argued that since the World Bureau is located in the UK, an expected initial action would be for it to reach out to academic members within its own immediate environment. However, it should be recalled that the organisation in question is an international one, with a global span of over 140 countries in 5 continents. If indeed knowledge is said to be contextual and culturally contingent, how then could a particular world-view define and inform a global intervention such as this one? For instance, why were there no ‘close collaborations’ with Universities in South Africa or Beijing for instance? In the search for cutting edge theories and latest thinking, why was there no observed recourse to scholarly perspectives outside of the ‘west’; even if only geographically defined? Considering that Africa is home to over 700,000 members in 31 MOs, it is thought that there could have been observed at least, a

few relevant citations or references to African paradigms of leadership, e.g. *ubuntu* (Mbigi, 2005).

4.9.3 Between Autonomy and Standardization

At this point, it is pertinent to re-visit the issue of organisational autonomy. This is especially so because, MOs are expected to be relatively autonomous and allowed to function within the contextual frameworks of their cultural environments; which is understandably why it presently espouses cross-culturalism as a core organisational value.

However, findings indicate a conflict here and further prompt the issue of to what degree this autonomy is permitted and at what point it is bounded, if at all. This is because despite the espoused autonomy, the organisation advances a centralised learning intervention. Furthermore, it is observed that the African MOs which are presumably autonomous and have even developed their own leadership training programmes under this autonomous framework and within the context of their unique cultural environments, are those now seen as ‘struggling’, and in need of an upgrade to ‘acceptable standards’. Why is this so?

My findings and analysis suggest that the African MOs together with their local training programmes are judged as ‘struggling’ and ‘not up to standard’ because the standard in question is one that is not defined by them. Again, if we consider the implicit dynamic of knowledge ethnocentrism that has been (un)consciously played out in respect of this organisational learning intervention so far, it appears that these MOs might have been ‘struggling’ to attain an organisational standard they had not defined, and as such to which they could seldom relate or organically implement (Kelly et al, 2006; Ladkin et al, 2009). Indeed, findings indicate that

their autonomy notwithstanding, these 'standards' to which they were expected to attain, have been defined for them.

Against the foregoing, it appears that the leadership development intervention in question could very well be challenged as an instrument of 'standardization' that is consistent with colonizing/civilizing patterns of thought. It has been argued that these underlying attitudes might still be present in many forms of management and organisation today (Adizes, 2007) and it is further suggested that many contemporary organisational practices still bear cultural imprints from colonial history (Prasad, 1997; 2003). Study findings from the learning programme in question do not show any particularly strong contrary evidence.

4.9.4 The Resource Team

Therefore it is argued that in this case, those deemed to be mostly in need of 'standardization' were the MOs from the Africa region and again, the clear absence of an African delegate on the *Resource Team* further underscores this. If Africa was not represented on the team that decides what should be taught and developed, then it appears that it might have been (un)consciously *othered* as that region which was most in need of development, and more so, was deemed incapable of effectively contributing to the process. Again in this case, it could not represent itself, so it must be represented by others who could 'speak for it' and decide on how to meet its developmental needs (Spivak, 1985, 1988). This non-representation on the resource team coupled with the fact that so far, none of the leadership development programme content had come from this region, carries notably underpinning inferences to the *standardization* of that referential inferior *other*. Perhaps, an important question to consider in this would be as to whether or

not there were *any* such materials available in this regard. That is, the fact that programme/module content had not come from this region suggests among other things that either this did not exist, was not available, or if available, was not considered necessary, relevant or important to the learning initiative.

Again, if we recall that initially, an organisational challenge earlier noted was that of quality variability in the African MOs' local training programmes (when compared with their western counterparts), which was viewed as a potential hindrance to the much desired progression to world-class; and if in this case world-class symbolized *western*; then it can indeed be argued that perspectives from the former might not have been considered relevant. That is, it is unlikely that the local training frameworks from within this region (which from the onset, had been judged inadequate) would have been considered especially helpful to the organisational attainment of a world class goal. Indeed, this might again explain why Africa had no visible representation on the resource team. Granted that there might indeed have been a relative scarcity of articulated resources (a situation which has been noted as a relative 'dearth' of literature in the theoretical review section), this in no way connotes the absence of knowledge.

In the light of postcolonial critique, it appears that this is again reminiscent of civilization and of development; a situation which rests on the age-old assumption of the existence of that under-civilized, under-developed *other* (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). In this case, Africa is once again that referential inferior *other* in dire need of development, of standardization. But yet again, it *cannot* develop itself, because it *cannot* represent itself; again, the subaltern *cannot* speak, which is why it must have others *represent* and *speak* for it on the Resource Team (Spivak, 1988)

4.9.5 A Summary

If indeed, a primary objective of the programme was to standardize processes across board, then from the above, it is arguable that this standard would be achieved through the implementation of a western model of leadership development. That is, in order for them to be brought up to standard, organisational leadership processes would have to be tailored after a western and possibly Anglo-centric model of leadership development. This is because the programme was not only developed and dispensed solely in English or the language of the colonizer (Said, 1978), but it was visibly structured around Anglo-American functionalist paradigms (Blunt and Jones, 1997). Not only does this seem congruent with postcolonial arguments of intellectual ethnocentrism, it appears quite reminiscent of scholarly notions of the colonizer's burden or the civilizing mission (Bhabha, 1994; Dutton et al, 1998; Prasad, 2003). That is, if we consider that non-western MOs were 'not meeting standards', then it followed that these had to be 'standardized' and the organisation's way of achieving this standardization was through its prescription of what it saw as a world class model. However, a major problem with this was that in light of postcolonial criticisms, this 'world class' standard seemed essentially comprised of a western ethnocentric worldview. Not only does this come across, it also underscores the assertion that western value orientations may be continually perpetuated through the instrumentality of increasingly universalised western management education, such as the intervention under study (Prasad, 2003; Adizes, 2007).

A further critical observation was made with respect to the Resource Team. In addition to the material being developed in the West and with the growing need

for latest theory, a resource team was set up to produce more teaching material for the programme. This seemed like a positive development that would help to broaden the content scope, as the team was made up of training professionals who also happened to be organisational members. The only problem with this was that members seemed to be drawn from specific world regions, with the Africa region having no representation on this. Whether or not this was deliberate cannot be clearly deduced herein. However, this physical enactment of othering (Spivak, 1990; Bhabha, 1994) is especially noted. If indeed the resource team was aimed at establishing a resource base from which paradigms could be drawn and explored, then it is necessary to consider why Africa had no representation on it. This nevertheless conveys the impression that in the paradigmatic scheme of things, Africa appeared to have been ‘othered’ (Obiakor, 2004) particularly in respect of its intellectual knowledge resources and worldviews.

It appears that all of the above considerations implicit belies an imperialistic organisational attitude that is (un)consciously portrayed towards the role and place of Africa within the context of the broader organisational setting. This is also not helped by the fact that in nearly a hundred years of existence, and in a continent that is home to over 31 of its member organisations, there is as yet, still no world centre located within the Africa region; and as at the time of this study, there did not seem to be any clearly articulated plans to site one there.

4.10 Further Considerations

Other important considerations are with respect to the nature of the organisation as gendered and non-profit. In this case, one might argue that because this was a gendered organisation in which programme participants were all female, findings

from this case study may perhaps represent, a gendered reaction to the tensions and challenges experienced during the course of leadership development engagement within the organisation. Though unconfirmed, it is possible that a gender-mixed group with male and female participants in attendance may have experienced things differently. Nevertheless, while it is felt that gender may have played a role in perceptions within the above, it is not possible to comment on this without essentialising what it means to be female (Spivak, 1988; Harris, 1990; Nkomo, 2008).

Furthermore, as a non-profit organisation, the YLDP was concerned with the careful use of its funds. This resulted in a degree of frugality with regards to the amount of time and money spent on learning and development. The programme was developed in-house, facilitators were mostly volunteer-members who had travelled to attend the programme from the various regions with no little or financial remuneration and participants had been sponsored to attend from their various countries. This resulted in very tight programme schedules and a relatively pressured learning period.

I am further mindful of the fact that focusing exclusively on the experiences of one particular racial group – i.e. the African participants – in the midst of a multicultural audience meant not seeing the others and appreciating the richness of their own experiences. At a different time and place, it may have been possible to explore a broader picture of the dynamics of inter-participant interactions. However, due to restrictions of scope and participant access, this was not possible.

4.11 Final Thoughts and Moving On

With respect to the African participants in particular, it appears that there might have been something of an internal conflict/crisis going on here. This is because in respect of the learning material, it seemed that there was very little to which they could contextually relate. This is because the programme theoretical frameworks were relatively western, and with little or no reference to African society. Nevertheless, there did seem to be some grounding within the organisational context itself. Many of the games and rhetoric appeared rooted in the history of the organisation, and may have been practiced over the years, as participants seemed familiar and relatively comfortable with them. But besides these, there is not much else that may have appeared familiar on this programme, as most of the African delegates had remained considerably silent during the formal classroom sessions, seldom contributing to discussions or debates.

The interviews present a different picture as in this, these participants tended to be freer and much more willing to speak up. They were evidently happy to be here and excited at the chance to travel, but generally had little to say about what they had learnt about leadership from the formal learning sessions. Much of the response was rhetorical e.g. *'the programme is good...'* and *'it is well organised...'* but not much was said about the content; either because there was not very much formal learning material that they could recognizably access, or because as some say, they did not understand it.

These behaviours enacted by the African participants called for a deeper engagement and reflection. Why were the participants largely withdrawn? From

the responses, it is evident that there was some difficulty in understanding many of the formal theories advanced during the learning sessions. Whether or not this was responsible for the quietness could not be immediately ascertained. However, in considering that leadership development learning provides a space for the construction of identity, and that such identities are indeed shifting and competing (Alvesson et al, 2010), it appears that there was a lot more happening in the room than was immediately obvious to the naked eye.

It could be that the reason for which many of these participants were now silent, was the same for which they were judged as ‘struggling’ – that of contextual dissonance; of shifting and competing identities – perhaps between who they were and that which they must prescriptively become. I argue that this stems from the possibility that they had been judged by a standard *defined for* them. That is, they had and were being evaluated by a knowledge framework which they have had little part in defining, to which they could seldom relate, but yet must now progressively attain.

Therefore, in the light of postcolonial critique, it is felt that this observed silence might have been provoked by a leadership development framework that was contextually and paradigmatically dissonant with whom they are. For instance, it is possible that in the course of their engagement with relatively unfamiliar mainstream literature, such participants may have had to (re)negotiate an understanding of leadership that was culturally unaligned with what they knew and perhaps, with how they saw themselves. Possibly, this is why they had remained largely quiet, choosing instead to deal privately with the tensions arising from such internal processes of appropriation. Again, it is equally likely that just

as some had reported, they simply did not understand what they had been taught, and therefore did not know how to contribute to the discussions; in which case, the question of why they did not understand, would then arise.

Indeed, it seemed necessary to pursue this further, particularly within the context of a separate leadership development case study. For this, I chose the MBA Leadership Development Programme undertaken by the prestigious Pan African University a.k.a. Lagos Business School, as I believed that it would provide a useful platform for further investigation. I would proceed with the following questions in mind:

In the context of the MBA leadership development module, *what meanings and interpretations of leadership/leadership development did participants construct for themselves even as they engaged with mainstream (a.k.a. western) leadership theories, and how did these constructions of leadership from the programme, align with their own cultural/contextual lived experiences of leadership?* What really was happening in the room? I believed it would be interesting to find out. And so, given that this question of contextual dissonance was a most pertinent one to further pursue, off I went to Lagos.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN CORPORATE NIGERIA – THE CASE OF LBS

5.1 Background

In this chapter, I explore issues of *contextual dissonance* between western functionalist paradigms of management development, and the lived socio-cultural realities of a non-western society. In this, I investigate theoretical claims that underscore the notion of cultural un-alignment between western knowledge and the cultural complexity of many African societies, i.e. non-western contexts. My inquiry in this case, is situated within contemporary Nigerian society. I conduct this investigation specifically within the domain of leadership development and in the context of an indigenously owned business school with strong ties to a leading European University. In this, I have sought to explore possible paradigmatic differences i.e. contextual dissonance, between the leadership ‘knowledge’ that African participants encounter on Leadership Development Programmes, and that which they experience within the daily lived context of their socio-cultural reality.

Earlier in the previous case study, the African participants on the LDP had seemed subdued, they were silent and withdrawn; and it was suggested that this could possibly be a psychological effect of contextual dissonance, i.e. that what they were learning was perhaps socio-culturally different from who they were. Otherwise, why couldn’t they ‘flow’ like the others? Why could they not ask questions? Were the theories being introduced perhaps too different from what they experienced in their lived contextual reality?

Be that as it may, I equally thought to keep in mind that this first case study involved the presence of a multi-cultural group. This meant that there was also the possibility that the silence of the African participants could have arisen from the fact that these were seated within a class of other non-African delegates. As such, being in what could have been considered an unfamiliar environment, it is possible that they may have been a bit more cautious than usual, and consequently, far less willing to express themselves, a situation that could perhaps account for the noticeable silence. If this were the case, then it seems the situation was not particularly helped by the fact that other participants appeared far more knowledgeable and informed about the theories being discussed, as evidenced by their frequent contributions to class discussions.

Nevertheless, examining this in the light of Goffman's frames analysis (1986), it is equally possible that the Africans' implicit 'expectations' of leadership were framed by different leadership experiences altogether, arguably influenced by contextual, socio-cultural and psychological underpinnings of their cultural environment, in whatever form (e.g. *ubuntu* as an African philosophical paradigm of leadership). Could it be that such frames of reference were presently being confronted by a mental appropriation of space (Höpfl, 2000)? Was their silence in any way provoked by inner tensions arising from perhaps, shifting and competing 'knowledges' (Alvesson, 2010); that is, between the 'western ideals' as presented by theories on the course, and the contextual experiences they brought to the class? Was this perhaps a real life picture of contextual dissonance being enacted in the leadership development learning space? What really was happening in the room? And so in thinking to pursue this question a little further. I sought for

another learning environment, bearing as close a semblance to this as I could find, in which I could explore what was happening in the room. Additionally, this time, I would speak to participants, in order to be able to understand, and contextually articulate, where these people were coming from; what they were saying and importantly too, what they were not saying, but was implicitly assumed and implied.

And so I chose the Lagos Business School, a reputable and internationally recognized Business School situated within the Nigerian Environment.

With its affiliations to a leading European Business School and the likely adoption of mainstream curriculum, I reasoned that this would be a wonderful place to study this phenomenon – where presumably, the theoretically disputed universality of western knowledge would meet with an indigenous audience; a perfect scenario in which one could observe the socio-cultural dynamics that would hopefully play out in the course of formal teaching and learning.

This chapter thus presents the case study of the Lagos Business School in Nigeria and critically examines the processes and challenges associated with Leadership Development Practice on the MBA. It is concerned with the knowledge and understanding of leadership that participants construct for themselves as they engage with the learning content on this programme. It equally explores participants' 'lived' contextual experiences of leadership, with a view to uncovering the implicit paradigms and expectations of leadership that they bring to this programme. Furthermore, it examines these experiential frameworks in the light of the knowledge that is 'gained' or 'constructed' on this leadership

development module, noting especially, any similarities or differences between these two. Therefore, the case study specifically addresses the pertinent theoretical question of contextual dissonance in contemporary leadership development, particularly with respect to the dynamics of this in practice, and within the boundaries of the study.

I locate the paradigmatic framework for this inquiry in the explanation that expectation is often shaped by experience, and experience is rooted or grounded in context, which is itself shaped by cultural influences (Goffman, 1986; Hamilton and Bean, 2005; Harmaan, 2007). As such, this research has been conducted against the theoretical background of scholarly criticisms that allege a dissonance between western functionalist paradigms of leadership on the one hand and the cultural complexity of the African Continent on the other, as present in the lived socio-cultural reality therein (Blunt and Jones, 1997; Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi, 2005). The inquiry significantly observes how such dissonance may have been enacted in practice, as well as the implications for the theory and practice of Leadership Development in Africa.

To this end, I have explored contemporary engagement with leadership education. In this, I have examined the knowledge that participants engage with while on the programme and in order to investigate the socio-cultural reality of these African participants, I have explored their lived experiences of leadership within the societal context that they inhabit (which as has been argued, is significantly impacted by cultural forces). I do this through a qualitative analysis of participant narratives of their lived experiences of leadership and of being led; which have been generated in the context within which they live and make meaning, as well

as that from which they must draw on rhetorical resources for sense-making (Hollander and Julian, 1969; Goffman, 1986; Hamilton and Bean, 2005). I have done this in order to be able to examine the leadership knowledge presented in contemporary leadership education (and how participants negotiate this) vis-à-vis that which they have 'known' from contextual experience and also, to uncover any assumptions that may lie implicit within these experiential accounts.

Findings from this particular study indicate a noticeable gap between the leadership knowledge that participants seemingly apprehend on the programme and the images, identities and expectations that mostly flow from their 'lived' experiential accounts of leadership within the societal context that they inhabit.

5.2 Contextualizing the Study

The critical relationship between *knowledge* and *context* is one that should of necessity, be herein acknowledged. This is because human beings are essentially social actors, that inhabit a social space, and it is within this reality that they must perceive, interact and construct meaning. Such perceptions, interpretations and interactions are neither static nor isolated, but rather they are complex, dynamically interwoven and increasingly (re)negotiated (Hearn and Ninan, 2003; Hamilton and Bean, 2005; Alvesson et al, 2010). Therefore it has been argued that the social space, context or reality that we inhabit is critical to the way we shape our understandings, meanings and subsequently, our knowledge about a thing (Goffman, 1986). It is for this reason that the story of the Lagos Business School Case Study would be deemed incomplete if it also, is not suitably articulated within its environmental framework. As such, this section attempts to situate this

case in its broader environmental context – geographical, economical and socio-cultural. Furthermore, I do this for two additional reasons.

First, the objective is to paint a clear mental picture, in order to help facilitate a better conceptualization and deeper understanding of the Nigerian Context. To achieve this, I employ the use of a theoretically picturesque account of all that I have seen, gleaned and understood.

The second reason is based on a more subtle and cautious awareness arising from various western media accounts of Nigeria, in which it has been reported for all the wrong reasons. These reasons have ranged from financial fraud and endemic corruption, to political instability and recently, suspected acts of terrorism. Indeed, while my patriotic defences naturally rise to the fore, my logical sense of reason must acknowledge that such negative reporting has not been entirely undeserved, and in many cases (way beyond the scope of this study), is to be expected. Nevertheless, while such reporting may have mirrored fleeting pictures of the country as it has recently been seen, I contend that these situations are often temporary and have occurred in relatively smaller areas as compared to the rest of the country. It therefore seems undoubtedly hasty to continually project it as the entirety of a nation's socio-cultural, political and economic reality. A recent example of this reporting may be found in the recent BBC airing of 'Welcome to Lagos', a three-part documentary on a Nigerian 'ghetto-city' (*See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00s3vdm>*). I argue that just as is typical of many an urban anomaly e.g. 'the Projects' in New York, not to mention some very noticeably run down 'Council Estates' in parts of South London; many of the world's mega cities are also homes to some of the world's largest slums, and I

believe that the situation in Lagos is arguably no different. The enduring environmentally chaotic situation in the aftermath of 'Katrina' in America's New Orleans, years after the unfortunate incident is a major case in point. However, unacceptable as this scenario has appeared in a presumably 'developed' world, the frequency with which it has been aired cannot be compared to the disturbingly repeated showing in the western media particularly – BBC and CNN – of documentaries that many increasingly consider an anti-Nigeria propaganda (*See also national fora discussions at Saharareporters.com & nigeriavillagesquare.com*).

As such, to *continually* project Nigeria, and many other parts of Africa, as an 'eternal' home to urban scourges such as poverty, strife, and AIDS is perceivably in bad taste, and it is with these in mind that I now present this case. Therefore, it is my intention to disabuse the mind of the reader and hopefully, to logically divorce the visualization of its social reality from that of an 'eternally chaotic' national context; for indeed, it has been previously noted that, '...within the western context, the majority of the images produced about Africa are negative. It is easy to think of Africa exclusively as a place of refugees, disease, and famine' (Hoeper and Shields, 2007: p.1).

It is in light of the above that I proceed to paint the Nigerian picture as may be seen and experienced in everyday life. I do this through an amalgamation of sources – the historical and cultural, as well as through the experiential and meaningful; even as seen through the eyes of the average Nigerian.

Reflexively, I equally acknowledge that I cannot totally divorce myself from this context, because I am first of all, Nigerian, and for a greater part, have experienced Nigeria in everyday life. Having been born and raised as a Nigerian Child in Nigeria, one could indeed argue that I have ‘known’ about Nigeria in a lived experienced way, simply because I lived and schooled there for most of my early life. Therefore I have stayed mindful of two things; first, I have maintained a cautious awareness of the possibility of conscious or unconscious prejudices that one might unwittingly harbour as a result of the above and secondly, of the fact that I have sought to explore phenomena in a world with which in a sense, I am familiar. It is with this realisation that I have struggled to de-familiarise the hitherto familiar and address my personal prejudices. This I have tried to do as much as it is possible, by bracketing my own pre-suppositions of that world and attempting to see its phenomena with ‘fresh eyes’ (Husserl, 1964); even as I present the experiential accounts of my Nigerian respondents in the final analysis,

5.3 Nigeria

5.3.1 Geography and People

Situated along the West Coast of Africa, Nigeria lies east of the Gulf of Guinea, and just north of the equator. It is bordered on the north by Niger and Chad, on the east by Cameroon, and to its west lies the Republic of Benin. The total area covered rests in the region of 923,768 square km (356,669 square miles) (*Nigeria National Geographical Sources*). It has a political federal structure and is divided into thirty-six states. Although it is home to about 250 tribes and native dialects, there are three major ethnic groups – the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast.

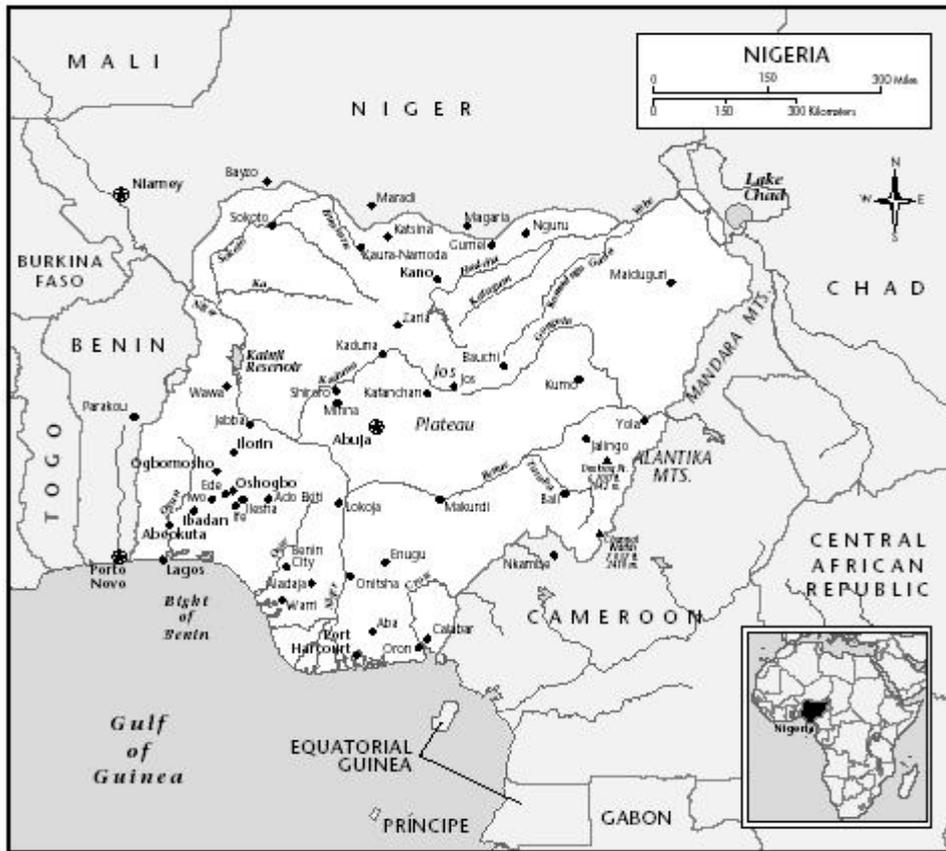


Fig 5.1 Map of Nigeria (Courtesy, National Geographical Sources)

Demographically speaking, Nigeria is reputed to have the largest population in Africa with the most recent estimation of over 120 million people. It is also the most densely populated, with about 345 people per square mile. A large percentage of the population is young and within the working class group and national population is estimated to grow at an annual rate of 2.6%. The Hausa-Fulani make up about 29% of the population, the Yoruba 21%, the Igbo 18%. Other smaller ethnic groups like the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri in the Niger Delta region comprise about 10 percent, the Ibibio, 3.5%, the Kanuri, 4%, and the Tiv 2.5% (National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, 2006 Population Census).

English remains the official language and is used in all public and corporate sector interactions; as well as in most public and private schools. In a country with more

than 250 individual tribal languages, English is the only language common to most people. The predominant indigenous language spoken in the north is Hausa while Yoruba and Igbo remain the dominant indigenous languages of the south. Historians note that prior to colonization, these languages were the unifying languages of the southwest and southeast, respectively, regardless of ethnicity. However, since the coming of the British and the introduction of mission schools in southern Nigeria, English has become the language common to most people in the area (Seibert, 2000; Adegbija, 2003; Paul, 2009)

There is also the local vernacular variant of English popularly referred to as *pidgin* which is a mix of indigenous languages and English, and is commonly spoken across much of the country. It consists essentially of English words interwoven with the local indigenous grammar structures. *Pidgin* is a language which originally evolved from the need for British sailors to find a way to communicate with local merchants and today, it is widely used in ethnically mixed urban areas as a common form of communication among people who have not had formal education in English (Adegbija, 2003).

5.3.2 Cultural History & Colonial Rule

The first recorded empire in present-day Nigeria was centred in the north at Kanem-Borno, near Lake Chad. This empire came to power during the 8th century C.E. By the 13th century, many Hausa states began to emerge in the region as well. Trans-Sahara trade with North Africans and Arabs began to transform these northern societies greatly. Increased contact with the Islamic world led to the conversion of the Kanem-Borno Empire to Islam in the 11th century (Onwuejeogwu, 1975, 1999). This led to a ripple effect of conversions throughout

the north. Islam brought with it changes in law, education, and politics. The trans-Saharan trade also brought with it revolutions in wealth and class structure. As the centuries went on, strict Islamists, many of whom were poor Fulani, began to tire of increasing corruption, excessive taxation, and unfair treatment of the poor. In 1804 the Fulani launched a jihad, or Muslim holy war, against the Hausa states in an attempt to cleanse them of these non-Muslim behaviours and to reintroduce proper Islamic ways. By 1807 the last Hausa state had fallen. The Fulani victors founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which grew to become the largest state in West Africa until its conquest by the British in 1903 (Mahdi, 1978; Usman, 1979; Onwuejeogwu et al, 2000)

Meanwhile, in the south, the Oyo Empire grew to become the most powerful Yoruba society during the 16th century. Along the coast, the Edo people established the Benin Empire – this should not be confused with the present-day Republic of Benin that borders Nigeria on the west – which reached its height of power in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As in the north, outsiders heavily influenced the societies of southern Nigeria. Contact with Europeans began with the arrival of Portuguese ships in 1486. The British, French, and Dutch soon followed. Soon after their arrival, the trade in slaves replaced the original trade in goods. Many of the coastal communities began selling their neighbours, whom they had captured in wars and raids, to the Europeans in exchange for things such as guns, metal, jewellery, and liquor (Smith, 1988; Falola, 1998; Falola and Heaton, 2008).

The slave trade had major social consequences for the Africans. Violence and inter-tribal warfare increased as the search for slaves intensified. The increased

wealth accompanying the slave trade began to change social structures in the area. Leadership, which had been based on tradition and ritual, soon became based on wealth and economic power. Upon the eradication of slave trade in 1807, many local leaders still continued to sell captives to illegal slave traders, leading to confrontations with the British Navy, which had been entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing the slave embargo. In 1851 the British attacked Lagos to try to stem the flow of slaves from the area, and by 1861 the British government had annexed the city and established its first official colony in Nigeria (Lovejoy, 1983; Metz, 1991)

As the non-slave trade began to flourish, so, too, did the Nigerian economy. A new economy based on raw materials, agricultural products, and locally manufactured goods saw the growth of a new class of Nigerian merchants. These merchants were heavily influenced by Western ways, with many soon becoming involved in politics, often criticizing local chiefs for keeping to their traditional ways (Ayandele, 1966). A new divide within the local communities began to develop, in terms of both wealth and politics. Because being a successful merchant was based on production and merit, not on traditional community standing, many former slaves and lower-class people soon found that they could advance quickly up the social ladder. It was not unusual to find a former slave transformed into the richest, most powerful man in the area (Ayandele, 1966). Christian missionaries brought Western-style education to Nigeria as Christianity quickly spread throughout the south. The mission schools created an educated African *elite* which also sought increased contact with Europe and a westernization of Nigeria (Obiakor, 2004; Falola, 2009).

Because the African elite were essentially a product of the western mission schools, it is thought that this development increasingly enabled a greater class awareness, one which subsequently informed the view of 'Western Education' as a good thing, and therefore, as something to be desired. If this is the case, it is not surprising that the new elitist class increasingly sought closer ties with the West. Furthermore, the fact that local chiefs were already being criticised for 'sticking to their traditional ways' implies that these 'local ways' were for some reason, perceived as unsatisfactory and less desirable than their western equivalent. I argue that this, coupled with the emerging class consciousness that was simultaneously being produced by western education, are part of what formed the basis for a growing inferiorization of the indigenous, and subsequently paved the way for a systematic idealization of the foreign or in this case, western. In some ways, this can be seen as an appropriation of space (Höpfl 2000) in which we see the old indigenous ways of life, being cast in the light of insufficiency and unsatisfactory, and increasingly *appropriated* for the new. That is, a situation in which westernization is subsequently embraced as the alternative and preferred way to go. In other words, this growing disdain for the indigenous did not merely occur in isolation, but was essentially propelled and further sustained by a growing western idealism. Thereafter, it is noted that 'westernisation' gradually became synonymous with 'elitism', and overtime produced a situation where it not only appeared elitist to be western-educated, but increasingly crucial to being so considered. Among other things, it is possible that this is what has provided a robust platform for the thriving commodification of western management education in Nigeria as we have it today. But why this may have occurred is a relevant question to consider; that is, what was it about being westernized that

made it increasingly romanticized as the ideal? What was it about being western that made it the increasingly preferred culture?

I believe that some important answers to this may be found within the postcolonial argument, even as Fougère and Moulettes (2011) have equally observed postcolonial critique as being a potentially insightful lens for unpacking the power relations that largely characterised western colonial education. First, I argue that a primary procedure crucial to this instance was instituted through an external process of *othering* that not only cast the indigenous as the ‘yet-to-be-civilized’ other, but advanced the culture of the occident as the opposite. That is, as *civilized, not barbaric* and as *not primitive* and therefore as *desirable* and to be *aspired to*. Indeed, it is recalled that in order to effectively undertake the civilizing mission, the colonizer had to first understand the world of the colonized, an understanding that was systematically achieved through a binary process of categorization that ideologically produced the concept of the unknown *other* (Darby, 1997; Dutton et al, 1998). That is, in order for its ways to be sufficiently understood, the latter was fundamentally conceptualised and homogenized by the former as that referential ‘other’, inhabiting an anthropological reality which was separately existing from the former and at the same time visible and knowable (Spivak, 1990; Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, to fully justify the civilizing mission, the referenced ‘other’ had to be presented as primitive, barbaric and as such, in need of civilization. I argue that in the case of Nigeria, the indigenous and its ways of being had been systematically cast in the light of an uncivilized, primitive and barbaric society, particularly as one that had continued to persist in the trading of human cargo, long after the abolition of the trade. Again, considering that Britain was entrusted with policing the coastal waters of Lagos, and ultimately

given the licence to invade the hinterland due to the activities of errant local slave merchants (Falola, 2009), it is very likely that this was advanced as a fully justifiable reason for a civilizing mission and the eventual colonial take-over.

Furthermore, it is believed that this representation of the *other* by the occident *self* did not only cast the latter in the light of culturally and behaviourally superior, but also underhandedly served to progressively distort the former's own conceptualization of self. It is suggested that among other things, this is what may have begun to set the tone for an inferiorization of the indigenous and the romanticization of the foreign. I argue that the *other's* own self concept overtime became increasingly distorted by a growing disenchantment with the same (Fanon, 1952; Bhabha, 1994). This is because it was consistently confronted with the 'facts' of barbarism and of primitivism – particularly in light of its persistence in the trade of human cargo long after the abolition; not to mention the 'positivity' of imperialist correction and subsequently, benevolent civilization a.k.a. the white man's burden (Fanon, 1952).

Secondly, I contend that western idealism in Nigeria may have been further instituted by an internal socio-economic process of *othering within the other*. That is, through the subtle propagation of an 'educated' elite social class within the protectorates, one that was as alien to the people as was colonialism itself. Whether or not this process was unconscious remains a matter for further debate; nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that it was, and this is captured in the following excerpt.

Lugard's immediate successor, Hugh Clifford (1919-25), was an aristocratic professional administrator with liberal instincts who had won recognition for his enlightened governorship of the Gold Coast... In contrast to Lugard, Clifford argued that it was the primary responsibility of colonial government to introduce as quickly as practical the benefits of Western experience. Uneasy with the amount of latitude allowed traditional leaders under indirect rule, Clifford opposed further extension of the judicial authority held by the northern emirs, stating bluntly that he did "not consider that their past traditions and their present backward cultural conditions afford to any such experiment a reasonable chance of success." He did not apply this rationale in the south, however, where he saw the possibility of building an elite educated in schools modelled on a European method. These schools would teach "the basic principles that would and should regulate character and conduct." In line with this attitude, he rejected Lugard's proposal for moving the capital from Lagos, the stronghold of the elite in whom he placed so much confidence for the future.

(Metz, 1991; p. 19)

It is equally advanced that colonial education systems were oriented towards 'the training of an administrative elite along metropolitan values' so as to facilitate the perpetuation of colonial power (Fougère and Moulettes, 2011; p.3). Although what was presented as 'knowledge' and 'education' was fundamentally contextual and in this case, the product of an imperialist functionalist culture, it found initial imposition and systemic legitimation through a colonial framework of political control and economic materiality (Spivak, 1985). In this, it appears that colonial power relations did not only shape the pedagogical agenda (Rigg and Trehan,

1999), but that a much less visible socio-economic dichotomy helped to further entrench it within the fabric of local society. Indeed, Altbach (2004) has observed the enduring influence of western educational systems in most developing countries, where it is believed that the elite have often contributed to western political and economic hegemony (Fougère and Moulettes, 2011).

What this implies is that the 'superior' principles of behaviour that had been prescribed to 'regulate' and appropriate 'uncivilized' indigenous conduct (Höpfl, 2000), may not only have been *imposed* through political power and control, but may have been further *perpetuated* through a subsequent platform that enabled a different kind of othering within an already 'othered' indigenous population; one that *othered* the other through the creation of a new elite class in Nigeria. As such, western formal education was not only imposed through political structures, but was perpetuated through a binary socio-economic categorization that ensured it went by unquestioned, embraced and idealized. I argue that the prescriptive knowledge frameworks of colonial education were relatively unchallenged because not only did the indigenous lack the political power to do so, but because they also lacked the will, having been systemically and socio-economically disempowered

This is a situation that may have ultimately led to intellectual subordination and ideological dependency that is observed today. In their article on the regimes of representation, Banerjee and Tedmanson (2010) refer to 'the unquestioned universal sovereignty of Western epistemological, economic, political and cultural representations which continue to negate and silence Indigenous communities' (p.148). There is evidence to show that this is still the case in Nigeria today – a relative 'silence' as regards indigenous criticism, a lack of constructive

questioning that may have increasingly stifled creativity, and an observed local complicity in the face of prescriptive theoretical frameworks that have continued to perpetuate an intellectual hegemony and undermine the creation of contextual knowledge frameworks within this region. (See analysis section). As can be seen in the case of Colonial Nigeria, there was essentially an arrangement that not only necessitated the need for 'formal education', but one that further sustained that need. Because in order for colonial subjects to be employed under imperialist rule and deemed 'qualified' to function within the ideological frameworks that governed the colonial political, social and economic 'experiment', they first had to be 'suitably' or formally educated.

Now, in the light of othering, it is easy to see how this sort of education might have become desirable over time, and one that was increasingly aspired to. If formal education subsequently positioned one for elitism, then it followed that being formally educated undoubtedly proved that you were elitist. Again, one must keep in mind that in any society, the elite are representative of a privileged social class, and therefore, we may see this situation as one in which a far more subtle but no less damaging form of othering was systematically deployed. In other words, the Colonizer's ideological hegemony may have been largely perpetuated by instituting a binary system of *othering within the other*; in which the primary *other* was becoming socially stratified into the one elitist class – with privileged access to formal education, and the 'other' non elitist social class without the same privileges. The more formal education was achieved, the larger the elite class grew, and the more it was aspired to; until traditional forms of knowing and being became gradually despised and increasingly considered irrelevant to societal advancement. In this, it was not only that fewer and fewer

people wanted to be seen as unlettered or illiterate, but it also meant that the more 'educated' you were, the more elitist you were considered, and as such the more privileged and respected you had become.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand that in the new colonial society, the connection between western formal education and elitism was essentially a socio-economic one. This is because being formally educated meant that you were employable in the new imperialist framework. Metz (1991) writes that the educated elite were often able to find employment in the new colonial government and wage system. It is also recalled that those who were employed in the colonial service were paid wages that afforded them a better standard of living, and which often in the case of domestic staff of the Colonial Officials, had access to more modern accommodation and amenities (Thomas, 1992). As such, these earned higher income and upkeep than most of the local indigenous peoples, who were mostly farmers, traders and fishermen. It is thought that this led to a growing preference for western education because it was seen as a ticket to better standards of living and other social benefits, e.g. association with the new elite. Thus, it appears that this steadily occasioned a situation in which western education was not only preferred, but one in which western ideals were progressively romanticized; because they guaranteed access to employment in the existing imperialist government, a comparatively higher standard of living, as well as increased social relevance.

Indeed, it is quite possible that early forms of *othering within the other* may have already begun to find initial expression in the form of 'divide and rule', or 'indirect rule' as pioneered by Lord Lugard in 1914. This was a colonial system of

governance deployed by the British among the indigenous peoples of the protectorates, with many of their 'stubborn' traditional rulers violently deposed, and local chiefs willing to co-operate with the imperialist government, subsequently (re)appointed to govern the people (Uchendu, 1965). In this, many traditional ruling houses and various other indigenous institutions of leadership (in many cases, these were ancient and often highly evolved forms of traditional governance) that had been stiffly resistant to the Colonial government were subdued, with their ruling authority voided and their kings sent on exile. In their place were appointed indigenous warrant chiefs, who would be loyal to Her Majesty's Government. A major case in point is that of Oba Ovoranmwun of the Bini Kingdom, as well as the Nana of Itsekiri, both of whom were very powerful and influential traditional rulers, dethroned in the struggle and subsequently exiled to Calabar and Ghana in 1897 and 1894 respectively (Obaro, 1968; Obinyan, 1988). These chiefs were given 'warrants' to act as local representatives of the British Crown within their communities and in order for these to effectively represent the colonial government of the day, they equally had to be schooled in the ways of whom they would represent.

Although, the imposition of warrant chiefs did indeed generate much resentment among the local peoples and eventually led to the Aba women's riots of 1929 (Agbasiere, 2000), I argue that this was more of a political revolt rather than a social reaction to shifting ideological norms. This is because the warrant chiefs were also highly resented tax collectors who closely co-operated with the imposition of colonial rule, and even though this did generate much political

resistance among the people, the more subtle forms of intellectual and ideological subjugation do not appear to have been so repudiated.

Again, warrant chiefs were well remunerated for their work, regularly demanding high salaries and it is believed that a number of them frequently employed their political power to enrich themselves significantly (Achebe, 1988). Although they may not have started out initially as socially influential, these chiefs became wealthy and politically powerful, having close access to the government of the day and able to influence decision making in matters relating to their communities. This is because they were rich, many were 'more educated' and could speak 'the language of the white man', and they were politically powerful. Therefore, I argue that although warrant chiefs may have been resented for political reasons, they were as much feared and admired for many other social and economic reasons.

Thirdly, it is suggested that the situation of western idealism in Nigeria may have been systematically perpetuated through rhetorical means of reiteration and the instrumentality of more powerful voices (Grint, 1997), a cause which was further advanced by the colonial machinery of missionary schools (Mbigi, 2005). Within the 'space' of these missionary schools, there is little doubt that the culture, identity, and voice of the indigenous were consistently confronted with that of the foreign, leading to what may be seen as the rhetorical obliteration of the former. Indeed, we may think of this as a scenario of *competing, shifting* and constantly (re)negotiated identities (Alvesson, 2010), in which case the less must progressively bow to more powerful 'voices'. While it can be argued that these relational experiences were short-lived and transient, occurring only within the

learning space of the classroom, it is equally considered that the growing synonymous identification of elitism with western education within the larger community, may have provided a far more 'heady mix' for the constantly re-negotiated identities to withstand, outside of that temporary learning enclosure. While this is not to say that indigenous culture completely disappeared on the outside – as such a claim would be fallacious; it is reckoned that the integrity and fabric of local culture was already being perceptively and progressively weakened by the socio-political and economic dynamics of the colonialist dispensation.

In considering all of the above together – that is, the political processes of *othering*; the socio-economic dynamics of *othering within the other* and finally, the rhetorical process of *powerful reiteration*; it is possible to see how cultural perceptions and identities, normative ideals, and indigenous forms of knowing and being, may have gradually shifted towards a more romanticized western orientation, having been made to compete unfavourably for psychological dominance within that particular social reality (Alvesson et al, 2010). The Colonial rule of Britain in Nigeria lasted for 46 years and finally on October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained full independence from Britain as a new sovereign nation. Since then, it has politically evolved from having a regional government structure to emerge as a single federal unit, presently known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

5.3.3 Lagos as Commercial nerve centre & Cultural melting pot

The area presently known as Lagos is located along the coastline of South-West Nigeria and covers an area of approximately 3, 577 square kilometres. Historical

records show that the early population of the area comprised of early Yoruba settlers of *Awori*, *Ijebu* and *Egun* descent, as well as freed slaves who returned home to the Continent. Bordered on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, Lagos initially served as a trade outlet with the Europeans, with free trade movement of slaves from the hinterland to the coast. This led to increased economic migration, as more and more dealers involved in the trade business moved from the hinterland to the coastal areas, to facilitate increased access to the merchants from overseas. The Slave business meant that Lagos experienced large scale economic transformation from the role it played as a veritable emporium of human trafficking (Lovejoy, 1983; Awofisayo, 2003).

Upon the abolition of slave trade, the British navy was entrusted with the responsibility of patrolling the coastal waters of the Atlantic in order to enforce the abolition and to forestall the illegal activities of errant slave dealers. This was sometimes met with resistance by the local slave merchants who tried to protect their illegal activities through armed means. However, the treaty the British signed with other former European participants of the abolished trade empowered its mandate to quell such resistance even up to the coastal boundaries of the hinterland (Falola, 2009). It has also been stated that such policing of the coastal waters fiercely opposed by local resistance from errant slave merchants, was what paved the way for the annexure of Lagos as a British Colony (Ajetunmobi, 2003; Falola, 2009), and thereby established the political structures and systemic frameworks for the ideological appropriation and substitution of the primitive barbaric 'other', a.k.a. the civilizing mission.

In 1861, Lagos was officially declared a Crown Colony, and this led to the establishment of sea ports in order to ease movement of resources and officials between Britain and the new colony, as well as to facilitate the free flow of trade. In 1884, as European countries engaged in a race to consolidate their African territories, the British Army and local merchant militias set out to conquer the Africans who refused to recognize British rule. In 1914, Britain officially established the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. The declaration of Lagos as a British protectorate therefore birthed an increase in economic activities which saw the emergence of British Companies such as Royal Niger Company (RNC), United Africa Company (UAC), Lever Bros., John Holt, and Barclays Bank. The unprecedented increase in economic and commercial activity further signalled a heavier throng of economic migrants from the hinterland to the coastal area of Lagos. Economic migration in turn, necessitated a commensurate requirement for infrastructure, housing and social amenities, which saw the original Lagos Island area gradually expand and steadily acquire the status of metropolis. Thus, Lagos not only became the seat of colonial power, but also grew to emerge as an economic hub of activity, a commercial nerve centre, as well as a cultural melting pot (Echeruo, 1977).

Although the end of colonial rule signalled the end of Lagos as the seat of British Colonial power, it nevertheless retained its place as the political headquarters and power base of the new national indigenous government in post-independence Nigeria. It held this position up till 1991, when the seat of national government was relocated to the new capital city of Abuja. Due to a lack of adequate infrastructure at the time, the new capital city was not very attractive for commercial activity, and was generally viewed as a political capital. However,

Lagos continued to remain the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, having grown overtime to become the nation's economic capital. Its status as cultural melting pot for people of diverse ethnic origins also made it attractive as a multi-ethnic labour market and most multinational and indigenous blue chip organisations still preferred to locate their corporate headquarters within the city of Lagos. Additionally, its proximity to the Atlantic coupled with its long winding beaches, not only made the city a tourist favourite, but more importantly, a real estate haven. Furthermore, its coastal location and sea ports have helped to keep Lagos as the bride of commercial and corporate activity, as well as a top spot for labour and economic migration (National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria: Manpower Stock & Employment Survey, 2010).

Furthermore, from the constantly growing population equally emerged a vast and ready market for consumer products, attracting foreign direct investment to the region, leading to the emergence of the Nigerian Stock Exchange Market. This coupled with the sustained increase in commercial and economic activity, has overtime contributed to the growth and vibrancy of the existing private corporate sector, making it a formidable employer of labour. Industries like Banking & Finance, Telecoms & IT, and the downstream Oil Sector are currently among the employers of first choice. Others include Professional Services and Consulting, Advertising and Media, and other forms of capitalist enterprise. Presently, Corporate Nigeria can be generally described as a dynamic multi-ethnic secular mix of working-age Nigerians, most of whom possess an undergraduate University degree as an educational minimum/basic employment requirement. Of these, an increasingly growing number already have, or are currently in pursuit of

higher postgraduate qualifications. Furthermore, though essentially multi-ethnic, this sector is largely comprised of formally educated workers who mostly hail from the southern parts of the country, a situation which is not entirely unconnected with the lower levels of formal literacy in the predominantly Muslim north. (National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria: Manpower Stock & Employment Survey, 2010).

While the private sector may have experienced a boom, the story appeared very different for the public sector. This was because although factors such as increased commercial and corporate activity, the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and the establishment of the Stock Exchange may have collectively signalled massive economic expansion for Lagos and the nation as a whole, increased government corruption arising from prolonged military rule and subsequent inept democratic governments, led to a decline in many aspects of the Public Service. Among the worst hit was the educational sector, which suffered from massive levels of government corruption and poor funding. A lack of funding eventually led to a gradual decay in the Higher Education sector, a situation further worsened by the Government monopoly of Higher Education at the time. Poor government funding was met with intense employee resistance, evidenced by endless wage tussles and incessant labour strikes. Long periods of strike implied longer periods of Universities' and Colleges' academic closure, and prolonged study tenures for higher education students, who had to suffer frequent unnecessary interruptions to the academic year. It also meant that fewer people were willing to work or even school in the higher education sector; a situation that led to an intellectual haemorrhage signified by a growing exodus of prospective

students from the country, as well as a massive brain drain of university academic staff (Yesufu, 1996; Oni, 2000).

More and more people, who could afford it, began to seek higher education overseas. Indeed, what used to be generally considered as an elitist privilege and the luxurious preserve of a select few became a growing necessity and an increasingly critical labour market requirement. Indeed, foreign educational qualifications soon became the critical deciding factor in the employment race for clinching the top jobs. Being educated in Britain or America was increasingly synonymous with possessing quality education. Many times, it didn't seem to matter whether or not the awarding school was recognised or accredited in its own country; if it was a foreign degree, then it was a product of an uninterrupted study tenure and presumably therefore, of 'quality teaching'. Because schooling abroad invariably meant expensive fees and huge travel and maintenance costs, as well as the required time commitment, it remained inaccessible to most. Even though a number of people who could do so, managed to work for some time and save up enough money to go abroad, there were others who could not make it for a variety of other non-financial reasons ranging from a lack of time to other personal reasons.

Again, Lagos lived up to its name as the bedrock of commercial enterprise, and soon enough, the ailing education sector received a boost via private investment and equity. Previously, this sector had been entirely controlled by the Federal and State Governments who had refused to grant operating licences to members of the private sector. However, the impending collapse of the sector saw a shift in

government resolve, and sooner than later, private universities of high standard began to emerge. A large number of these were owned by religious organisations as well as wealthy individuals and a few by private trusts. These paid much better salaries, and as such, attracted quality academics. Although it also meant that such private institutions charged higher school fees, nevertheless for many, they provided a more affordable alternative to the far more expensive option of schooling abroad.

5.4 The Lagos Business School – Background

Among the most esteemed at the time, was the *Centre for Professional Communications*, which began operations in 1991 and later changed its name to *Lagos Business School* in 1992. Located within the sprawling city of Lagos, from where it invariably derives its name, the School has its main campus sited on the outskirts of the Victoria Island metropolis, an up-market band of the Central Business District. Though owned by the African Development Foundation (ADF), a Nigerian not-for-profit Educational Foundation, the Lagos Business School is run by the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, an institution of the Catholic Church, which is responsible for co-ordinating all teaching, publishing and research activities of the School. In 1996, the ADF applied for the license to operate a private university, and in January 2002, the Federal Government granted approval for the establishment of Pan-African University. LBS thus became the first school of the University, offering Executive MBA, MBA and doctoral programmes (lbs.edu.ng/celebrating-20-years/milestones).



Fig 5.2 the Lagos Business School

(Courtesy of LBS Communications and External Relations Department)

The Lagos Business School was set up with the main objective of ‘providing high quality general management education *relevant to the Nigerian business environment* for executives’ (Website – <http://www.lbs.edu.ng/>). As advertised in its brochure, the School delivers executive programmes at top and middle management levels aimed at systematically improving the practice of management in Nigeria. Offering a host of open-enrolment business and management seminars for business leaders and managers, it also designs bespoke in-house seminars and workshops geared towards the learning needs of organisations with larger staff groups. LBS programmes have been quite successful, reportedly attracting over 2,000 participants from multinational and indigenous companies yearly.

Executive education at LBS is comprehensive, drawing from the experiences of multinational faculty and participants. Our system of teaching ensures that participants gain management knowledge and skills, by employing the case-study method and group-work approach to learning. We believe in learning by doing. At LBS the fundamental

inspiration is provided by the Christian vision of man, society and economic activity. The Prelature of Opus Dei, an institution of the Catholic Church, takes responsibility for guaranteeing that this vision underlies all teaching, publishing and research activities of the School. The School places a premium on maintaining a very keen relationship with the corporate clientele it serves. Constant interaction with participating organisations, a committed corporate support group of 70 companies, plus counsel and support rendered by the School's distinguished Advisory Board play major roles in securing this linkage

(Adopted from the LBS Website –
<http://www.lbs.edu.ng>)

The Lagos Business School therefore evolved with a strong academic focus on executive management and business education. Arguably, this was in itself, an astutely strategic positioning; one that very quickly saw it emerge as the darling of the private corporate sector, being renowned for its high academic standard. An additional agenda appeared to stem from a growing need to reduce the out-flux of corporate delegates and human resource professionals who continually sought business and management development outside the country shores (<http://www.lbs.edu.ng>). As such, LBS was the first of its kind in the country, having been founded in response to a growing need for globally literate business managers in a rapidly globalizing and dynamic corporate Nigeria. Not surprisingly therefore, it soon acquired the status of an Ivy League business school. However, it is quite possible that beyond a visible disillusionment with what many saw as a failing national higher education sector, the attractiveness and hence, unbridled success of the LBS could also easily be attributed to a previously entrenched romanticization of western idealism, arising from and sustained by elitism; no

doubt a psychological offshoot from the colonial years. Its proudly touted affiliation with the IESE Business School in Spain, not to mention its Harvard-style curriculum modelling, are a seeming attestation to this; both of which have served to build and sustain a very prestigious brand in the Nigerian Corporate Consciousness.

Presently, attending LBS has become a professional high point of achievement in any corporate business career, as well as something of an entry password for securing certain top management jobs (See also *lagosbusinessschool.virtual.vps-host.net/mba*). I note that this is somewhat reminiscent of accounts from the colonial era, in which formal education automatically guaranteed one access to the imperialist workforce, and firmly established them in the elitist echelon of society (Metz, 1991; Thomas, 1992). As it appears, the case of Corporate Nigeria and the LBS is not very different. Beyond the services of the quality management education it was set up to provide, lies the keen attractiveness of its ties to the west. I argue that just as in the days when the 'educated elite' sought increased westernization and spurned the indigenous, it is more or less the same today; as again this time, its affiliations to a leading European Business School and the adoption of a Harvard Business School Curriculum provide yet another socio-economically attractive mix, that may be proving difficult to resist.

Among other things, it appears that this has not only made LBS the heavily courted bride of corporate Nigeria, but also seen it expand its academic reach to a growing number of other African Countries including Ghana and Sierra-Leone and more recently, Egypt and Kenya. Currently, Its Executive MBA course year

strategically incorporates planned visits to selected countries in Europe – an event that is highly anticipated by potential and current students. Indeed, it is possible that this is the sort of anticipation that naturally accompanies foreign travel and the fresh curiosity that often comes with the opportunity to see and experience other parts of the world. Again and as is argued in this case, it might equally be an openly expressed desire to prescriptively embrace an ‘ideal’ way of management and organization. In addition, the MBA programme also attracts prestigious internships and promising future careers within its elite network of Alumni and strategic business partners (MBA brochure: www.lbs.edu.ng).



Fig 5.3 LBS, Reception 1 (Courtesy of LBS Communications and External Relations Department)

Presently, its recent Financial Times ranking on the global executive MBA charts continues to strengthen its already reputable and highly coveted elitist brand. Organisations’ MDs, mid – top level managers, and even private entrepreneurs

e.g. CEOs, have increasingly subscribed to the LBS Brand, and apparently, still continue to do so.

5.5 Framing the Inquiry

In recounting the unfolding of research events, it is necessary to chronicle important aspects of this study journey in the quest to uncover truth. Why did I choose LBS? What was I looking for? What exactly did I seek to unearth?

5.5.1 *What had I come to find, why LBS?*

I had come all this way to observe a group of non-western participants on a leadership development module. This was a racially homogeneous group of young Nigerian professionals who were enrolled on an internationally recognized MBA programme. I note that the reasons for this ‘international’ categorization were not explicitly stated. Indeed, since this was a nationally homogeneous group, this categorization could not be pointedly attributable to reasons of demographic and racial distribution within the class population. Therefore, a few other reasons left to consider include *LBS’ affiliation to the IESE Business School in Spain*, secondly, *the deliberate Harvard-style patterning of its study operations* and lastly, *the School’s Financial Times ranking of its programmes*. While this international ranking is undoubtedly crucial to the academic positioning of the Business School within the wider context of global management education, I wonder if the wherewithal of such international ranking should not be more critically examined. It is observed that *all* of the three features mentioned above are unequivocally linked to the West, i.e. Europe and America. The IESE is seen as a leading business school in Europe, and so is HBS its American counterpart,

currently ranked among the first 3 Business schools in the world. In addition, the Financial Times ranking is an MBA rating system that was conceived in Europe (see <http://aboutus.ft.com>).

Therefore, the question is ‘on what basis is LBS judged ‘international’? The 3 reasons cited above indicate that its affiliation to the west is a key determinant of acceptability. In this case, it appears that in order to be judged acceptable and internationally recognized, a demonstrated link with the west may have increasingly become both a pre-requisite and an expectation. That is, an external pre-requisite to being considered international and acceptable by the wider educational network; and an internal expectation that is again traceable to a colonial legacy of western idealism and a systemic romanticization of the same. Indeed, a close critical understudy of the FT ranking criteria might help provide further insight into this. Nevertheless, I concede that this in itself is thought for another day, and could possibly provide the basis for further research upon the satisfactory completion of this study. For now, against a background of *contextual dissonance*, I had come to observe the afore-mentioned participants and to find answers to the following questions;

- I. What exactly was being taught on this leadership course and how did participants engage with this in the learning space/class?

- II. What were participants’ constructions of leadership from the engagement with this module? That is, what did participants make of what they were

taught? How did they respond to the ideas discussed on the module? I.e. did they accept, reject, or adapt it? Or like in the other case, did they withdraw?

III. What were their experiences of leadership in their lived context? (I.e. in their experiential accounts of 'leading' or 'being led'); what were their expectations?

IV. How did (II) fit with (III)? That is;

e) If the taught ideas were accepted and considered relevant, did this reflect in their lived experiences and expectations of leadership, or not?

f) If they were rejected, were the rejected notions at variance with their lived experiences of leadership, or not?

g) If there was withdrawal, what did this mean?

h) If the reactions were all or none of the above, again, what could be made of this?

In this, I sought answers to the above by first observing participants' teaching and learning interactions on the Leadership module. Next, through semi-structured interviewing, I sought to understand the knowledge and understanding of leadership that they appeared to construct while on *this* programme; subsequently, I explored participants' lived experiences and expectations of 'leading' and 'being led' in the context of everyday life.

The premise for this approach rests on the argument that expectation is said to be shaped by experience; and that this experience itself, is grounded in context (Goffman, 1986) (Hearn and Ninan, 2003; Hamilton and Bean, 2005). Therefore, my expectation of leadership is shaped (negatively or positively) by my experience; and because my experience of leadership ‘happened’ within my environment, it is said to be contextual. This thus implies that such experienced accounts of leading and of being led, will more or less occur in the context of my everyday living. As such, it goes without saying that if I have had ‘good’ leadership experiences, then my expectations of ‘good’ leadership would derive from the good experiences I have had, in my lived context.

Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that my own experience of leadership, occurring in my social environment, was itself informed by certain thought processes, social interactions and other relational dynamics of exchange (Hofstede, 1980) which arguably, could be considered unique to the given societal context in which it occurred. Essentially and if sustained, it is possible that this experience would likely inform the mental and psychological frameworks for any future expectations I might have, of the same phenomenon. That is, my thought processes, interaction and social exchange occurring in context, are what have formed the basis for my good experience. Consequently, my ‘good’ experience would more or less shape my definition and expectation of what should be good, because it has inadvertently formed the basis for my social judgement, and is now become my ‘frame of reference’ (Goffman, 1986). Therefore, frames are said to be contextual because they are constantly shaped by the various elements of the physical, social, political and cultural environment.

Going forward, it is observed that the foregoing applies to both sides of the argument; that is, to the ‘western’ management theorists on the one hand, and also, to the Nigerian programme participants on the other. If indeed, the paradigms of leadership being taught have come from the west (because they have been mostly developed by western scholars), then it can be reasonably argued that the understanding and conceptualization of leadership articulated in such theories, cannot be entirely divorced from their contextual frames of reference, and this is why they have been termed ‘western functionalist paradigms’ (Blunt and Jones, 1997). Furthermore, the same principle would fairly hold for the other side of the coin, i.e. my respondents, whose understanding, experiences and expectations of leadership can also not be totally divorced from their own lived non-western context. Again, here lies the crux of the matter – the theoretical question of *contextual dissonance*.

This precisely, is what I went to Nigeria to investigate; whether or not there was a contextual dissonance being enacted out in the *space* of leadership development, how this was played out, and the implications of this for the future of leadership development theory and praxis.

5.6 Research Phases and Data Collection

In February 2010, I travelled to Lagos Nigeria, where I met established contacts at the Lagos Business School. During this time, I held discussions with my key contact and made to familiarise myself with the environment, I was also introduced to the MBA 7 Cohort and other key members of staff.

The study was conducted over a three-week period. Data was collected through observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was carried out mostly

during class sessions, while the interviews were held during session breaks and after-class hours. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant codes and pseudo-labels such as – CS101, CS102, Participant A, Participant B, etc.

5.6.1 Observation

In observing, while maintaining a general awareness of my environment, I still had to keep my sight within the limits and framework of the ongoing inquiry. As I watched, I paid close attention to the following:

What was taught – This included module titles, areas/sub-topics covered, theories considered as well as the specific types of learning materials used e.g. cases

How it was taught – This primarily had to do with the structure of the programme itself i.e. how many sessions, what was the primary mode of delivery? Was it facilitation over formal learning sessions, informal learning structures such as the use of games, team work, or case studies, etc.?

Participant-Facilitator Exchange –This involved studying the classroom atmosphere and taking particular note of the dynamic interactions occurring within the learning space, particularly how participants reacted to what was being taught. Elements of social exchange between the facilitator and students, as well as among students themselves were closely observed; attention was also given to the pockets of dialogue during case analyses, as well as the general and rhetorical language employed during class discussions.

5.6.2 Interviewing – Participant Selection and Administering the Interviews

Respondents were randomly selected and this was based mostly on their schedule, availability and willingness to speak rather than on demographical attributes such as age or gender. Although a number of students were unable to commit in this regard, I was able to interview as many who were willing to spare the time. For those who were, they were made aware of the time requirements for this and having given consent, the interviews were subsequently conducted.

30 participant interviews were held; of these, 29 were with members of the MBA Cohort and 1 was with a senior faculty member (coded as FM2001) who was also programme co-ordinator for the MBA. Below is a table showing respondents from the cohort;

Table 5.1 the Respondents from the LBS MBA 7 Cohort

No.	Participant Code	Country	Gender	Age (Years)
1	CS2001	Nigeria	Male	25
2	CS2002	Nigeria	Male	30
3	CS2003	Nigeria	Male	33
4	CS2004	Nigeria	Male	31
5	CS2005	Nigeria	Female	30
6	CS2006	Nigeria	Female	25
7	CS2007	Nigeria	Female	25
8	CS2008	Nigeria	Male	29
9	CS2009	Nigeria	Male	25
10	CS2010	Nigeria	Male	30

11	CS2011	Nigeria	Female	25
12	CS2012	Nigeria	Female	27
13	CS2013	Nigeria	Male	27
14	CS2014	Nigeria	Female	32
15	CS2015	Nigeria	Female	26
16	CS2016	Nigeria	Male	28
17	CS2017	Nigeria	Female	28
18	CS2018	Nigeria	Female	26
19	CS2019	Nigeria	Female	29
20	CS2020	Nigeria	Male	25
21	CS2021	Nigeria	Male	33
22	CS2022	Nigeria	Female	30
23	CS2023	Nigeria	Male	26
24	CS2024	Nigeria	Female	27
25	CS2025	Nigeria	Male	28
26	CS2026	Nigeria	Female	Undisclosed
27	CS2027	Nigeria	Male	27
28	CS2028	Nigeria	Female	29
29	CS2029	Nigeria	Female	32

The interviews were semi-structured around two major aspects;

- First, I asked respondents to discuss the main ideas that had been taught in class and in this, I got them to tell me about what they felt they had learnt, and also what they thought of this in relation to their everyday work life, i.e. how they saw it and judged its practical relevance to their work and daily living.

- Then I asked them to tell me a personal leadership story from their own experience, one that they considered memorable.

Subsequently, I embarked on a phenomenological analysis of interview data in order to be able to identify any recurring patterns or dissonant voices that might be evident therein. In this, I separately analyzed participant responses from both questions, in a bid to identify and extract the emergent themes, if any. I did this by applying Hycner's guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data (*See section 3.4.1*). The identified themes formed the basis for collective responses to either question. As I did this, I remained on the look out for any sharp variances in opinion, which might be worth exploring further.

In the final analysis, I compared the collective responses from both questions. I was particularly interested in exploring the relationship between participants' taught understanding of leadership and their contextual experiential accounts? For example, if people had expressed certain ideas from the class discourse as being relevant and ingrained in their daily lives; were these elements reflected in the lived experiences they recounted from their context? Did the knowledge gained in class resonate with participant experience, and from the data I had, was this resonance readily deducible?

5.7 Presenting Findings and Analysis

Findings discussed in the first part of this section are mostly from field notes, as well as from observing the module content of the programme. I begin with an overview of the module and a demographic description of the respondents followed by that of the physical learning environment and the ambience within.

Thereafter, I describe the mode of learning, including the content and style of facilitation. Subsequently, I present excerpts of the learning material – case studies and key ideas alike, and participant responses to them; in this I include dialogical excerpts from the class conversations. Finally, I present my analyses of all of the above in subsequent sections.

5.7.1 The Leadership Development Module

The Leadership Development Module formed part and parcel of the two-year MBA programme and was included as a core module. It had been designed and developed in-house by two Senior Faculty Members of the Business School. One of these was a Professor of Human Resource Management & Organisational Behaviour and also an Academic Consultant on Management Training. The other was a key faculty member and pioneer staff of the University as well as Co-ordinator of the Full-time MBA programme and an active Consultant to industry; in addition to developing programme content, she was also responsible for delivering the module and facilitating the learning sessions. Both of these had schooled in Europe and were also very senior experienced academics; with each having taught a minimum of 17 years in the Human Resource Management Department of the Business School.

The programme was structured around formal classroom-based learning which included theoretical content and the analyses of case studies. Added to this were pre-reading materials, take-home assignments and some element of group work.

5.7.2 Demographics

This study was conducted with the MBA Cohort 7 Class of 2008 – 2010, which was at the time, in its final year, and just at the start of the *Leadership Development* module. This was a group essentially comprised of young professionals. With a total number of 60 students in all, the class was sub-divided into business teams and seminar work groups and these were to remain constant throughout the entire study period. This means that team members are expected to stay and work within their groups for an extended minimum period of two years.

Gender-mix

This class had a near equal gender distribution, about 49% of the class was female, and the other 51%, male. There appeared to be a free flow of interaction between the sexes, and gender differences seemed largely understated. This meant that group members seemed to relate with one another more on a professional basis and there were no visible signs of gender bias, neither did there appear to be any allusions to gender discrimination; everyone was heard equally and free to express their views and a number of the teams were headed by women. Furthermore, the length of time during which the groups had stayed together had over time allowed for group cohesion. It was therefore no surprise to find that most had become friends by the last few months of the programme, during which this study was conducted.

Age & Experience

This class age range was between 25 to 33 years old. However, not every one was willing to disclose their actual age, and regrettably, the exact figures could not be

made available to me for reasons of personal data protection. Nevertheless, a large number of class respondents were willing to. Of these, some were at the early stages of their management careers, while others were already experienced and aspiring to mid management career levels.

Ethnicity & Religion

Class members hailed from different parts of the country, and not all were initially resident in Lagos before the start of the programme. While some had come from the Igbo-speaking part of the south east, others had had to re-locate from parts of the Niger Delta to be able to attend. A large percentage of the class were from various parts of south-western Nigeria (including Lagos itself) which are predominantly Yoruba speaking. Overall, about 85% of the class was from the south, and the other 15% hailed from the northern part of the country. There were no foreign students enrolled on this course.

Although people were from different religious backgrounds, the entire class appeared unevenly divided between two main religions – Christianity and Islam. Over 80% of the class were Christians – albeit from a wide denominational range of Catholic to non-orthodox Pentecostal, while less than 20% was Muslim. At this point, it is necessary to state that of those who were Muslims, a number of these were from the Yoruba speaking south-west including Lagos.

5.7.3 *Environment and Learning*

The ambience of the campus was particularly serene. It wasn't a very large one, but rather stylish and of contemporary architectural design. There was a very large

ultra modern block which sat atop a pristine grass lawn, flanked on either side by water fountains. This block contained the seminar rooms, group meeting rooms as well as academic staff offices. On one side of this building was an adjacent block of offices, this housed university support functions such as the legal, the communications and external relations departments. The car park was a relatively large with regards to the expanse of land it covered, and for each time I arrived this campus, I observed that the non-staff parking slots were nearly always full. This seemingly evidenced the fact of a high patronage and student subscription, owing to the school's strong brand and appeal.

On the inside, you could say that the MBA 7 meeting room was extremely pretty, with what could be considered near perfect lighting. The walls were entirely panelled, made from dark polished wood and the ceiling, an interspersed arrangement of pointed fine lights. The room bore a close semblance to a mini-amphitheatre, and the seating arrangement, like most modern classrooms, was serially concentric; that is, the seats were arranged in sequentially elevated semi-circles, with each circle a step higher (or lower, depending on which direction you were looking from) than the next. The tables were polished gleaming wood, with a laptop neatly perched in front of each person. There was a huge screen prominently perched on the opposite wall from the seating, and a pulpit-like facilitator stand almost in front of it. This was the room in which all sessions were held for the duration of the programme. Within this class, everything looked and felt very svelte, almost like it was trying to prove a point; it seemed like a deliberate attempt to match and accommodate the expectedly svelte taste of those who came to learn here. Most of those who enrolled on the MBA and EMBA

could afford to because they were mostly drawn from the crème of Corporate Nigeria and had top paying jobs in the industry. The rest of those who didn't, were from comparably well-off homes who could afford the fees; again, what you could easily term the elite of this society. So, it appeared that everything within this environment was crafted to suit the 'taste' of its clients. Again, what this seemed to confirm was that within this society, the elite were those who mostly sought educational affiliations with the west. It was still considered especially prestigious to have attended the LBS.

The MBA 7 was a racially homogeneous class, quite different from that encountered in the previous case study. Although participants were from different professional backgrounds, the learning atmosphere was more relaxed and interactive. Communication seemed fluid and not entirely restrained; in this, people tended to express themselves in a less reserved manner. Discussions were actively engaged in and views freely solicited from course participants.

It seemed that the social and interactional strength of this particular learning environment was rooted in a strong sense of familiarity, as well as in the obvious fact of racial homogeneity. During the sessions, the students seemed at ease with the facilitator, but I could often sense a slight air of crispness in the room, and the atmosphere usually had a slight business edge to it. Except for Fridays when people were allowed to dress down, I observed that everyone, including the facilitator was always dressed formally in corporate work clothes.

At first glance, the mode of instruction seemed largely traditional – Class with one facilitator. The facilitator assumed a firm posture and appeared quite in control of

the class. However as the sessions progressed, it emerged that the style of facilitation was a seeming mix of consultative, interactive, and a trifle authoritarian. There was quite a bit of dialogue, mostly between facilitator and individual students, and I noticed that although interaction levels were significantly high, the facilitator was mainly deferred to by the students. This is something that might not be entirely unconnected to the traditional African reverence for authority, age and cultural perceptions of seniority.

Although this programme mostly involved classroom-based learning, there was a significant amount of pre-reading material and take-home assignments. The learning material was a mix of leadership theory and case study analyses, which meant that participants had a chance to discuss the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of leadership. The approach to learning was open and interactive, and many times, discussions from the case studies ‘spilled’ over into lunch time. Many of the students seemed particularly animated and willing to hear and be heard. Overall, this seemed to me quite an interactive learning environment.

5.7.4 Exploring Content – Case Studies

As previously noted, a key learning approach on this module was the engagement with business case studies. These were essentially targeted at the impartation of leadership *values*, and well before the start of the course, participants were given case study readings to familiarise themselves with. They were to return to class where considerable time was to be spent on the review of each.

As such, the mornings frequently begun with the analysis of a leadership case study and the facilitator initiated these discussions and as was often the practice, solicited responses from the class. A close look at the course materials revealed

that they had been drawn mainly from the Harvard Business Review, and adopted for use here at the LBS. The Harvard Business School logo was often visible at the top left hand corner of each sheet. Typically, these case studies were framed within the context of American society. Among these was the case of Erik Peterson, a Los Angeles-based company executive, currently faced with a leadership crisis on his new job. Up till this time, he had been 'played around' by top executives of the company in a power game and at the end of the day, had been judged incapable of effectively leading his division.

At this point, I wondered why this wholly indigenous Nigerian Business School would think it necessary to adapt the use of mainly US Case Studies on its leadership development programme, especially when this had to do with the development of leadership values. If values are supposedly a function and derivative of culture (Hofstede, 1980), it is not especially clear how leadership values apparently drawn from US culture, would help to develop leaders here in Corporate Nigeria, except of course, the Nigerians were trying to be American; in which case the issue of western idealism again arises. What seemed particularly interesting was the gusto with which the case analyses were undertaken within this learning space. Although I had never been in an American classroom, it often felt like I was sitting in one. There was talk about 'taking hard decisions' and how the CEO was in a 'firing mood'.

Facilitator: *Now, do you think this is good or bad?*

Student A: *I don't think it's good, because how many people are you going to fire?*

Student B: *I think it's good because it would send a statement to everyone. Why are you keeping the person if he's not doing what he should?*

There was equally some gender dynamics here as I noted that while the guys often seemed to be on the 'hard' and 'firing' side, and the ladies appeared not so favourably disposed to the idea. Again, the general approach to the critical evaluation of this case study was particularly brisk, business-like and bordered on the aggressive. There was also a particular emphasis on achieving the 'bottom-line' and on 'surviving'

Student C: *Don't be a victim; be a survivor!*

Facilitator: *Okay, any positive comments about Erik?*

Student A: *He was brilliant and had a sense of direction, some clarity about where his career was headed*

Student B: *He had a stable character, that is, he was mature.*

Student C: *Having been in the military, one would have expected Erik to have more courage, a bit more assertive.*

Facilitator: *It is obvious that he was not able to face conflict; he was a 'nice guy'.*

Student D: *I think in his own way, he tried to encourage performance from Sabina and the others.*

Facilitator: *there was some form of recognition of performance. Although he coached Curt, and tried to teach him a few things, he needed more experience on board his team. He took things for granted.*

Student E: *There should be no excuses for non-performance.*

Student F: *He should have known when to ask for help*

Facilitator: *Yes, maybe mentoring, coaching...which he should have realised he needed. Have you ever heard of somebody talk about 'tough love'? I would rather talk about 'tough empathy'. That is, 'I feel with you, but I will still have to demand from you. I understand your situation, but I would still need for you to produce results'. Do you think that Erik had that?*

Class: *(gives a resounding 'No'!)*

Most people felt that Peterson should have long been 'fired', but they disagreed on the reasons why this should have been. Some cited that it should have been for incompetence and lack of experience; others felt that he was not a good team player and lacked people management and relationship skills. Some felt he was

much too quiet when he should have been vocal, wasting time in the process, and as a result was eventually sidelined due to a lack of results and poor performance.

Overall, Erik is expected to have toed the 'hard line' and to have been more *assertive*.

It is interesting to observe within the analysis of this case study, the values that are brought to bear. For instance, Erik is being criticised for not being 'hard' or assertive enough, and as someone who would avoid conflict at all cost. Obviously, this class thinks that there is a problem with this, because in the final analysis, one of the key strengths perceived lacking in Erik's leadership approach is his reluctance to face conflict where necessary. But what does this say about leadership perception within this group? If truly the expectations that people display towards a thing are fundamentally derived from their contextual frames of reference (Goffman, 1986), then, it follows that the class' perceptions and expectations of Erik's leadership style was equally rooted in the beliefs, norms and values that participants brought to this space. In this case, an implicit leadership paradigm that appeared to be emerging was *assertiveness*.

Another case study, also drawn from contemporary American society was the story of Benjamin Brookes, an ex- student of a renowned Business Professor Maurice. In a letter to his former schoolteacher, this ex-student writes about how short-changed he feels because despite having given over 20 years of his life to a company, he has been recently 'cheated' out of the position of CEO. This position had become vacant after the retirement of the immediate past Chief Executive Officer, one with whom Benjamin felt that he had shared a particularly close

relationship. He feels hurt because he has ‘loved’ and ‘made sacrifices’ for Livingstone Inc. at the expense of his personal life, marriage and kids. His work had become his life, and although he has remained a six figure earner, he currently lives in a hotel room and has done so for the past five years in order to manage duties in the New York Office. At the moment, Benjamin is attending interviews with other prospective employers, having soberly reflected on his entire work life and the outcomes. Now, he is writing Prof Maurice to remember to ‘warn’ other students to ‘be selfish’ and ‘to put their personal interests first’, because according to him, ‘no company is worth making sacrifices for’.

During the analysis of this case study, not a few people thought that Benjamin had been selfish, putting his own career ambition first and conveniently forgetting about every other person, including his family, subordinates, and even his notable Professor Maurice until now.

Below are some of the class’ responses to this case

Student A: *His life has been built around his job and he has forgotten about everything else.*

Facilitator: *Yes, in this things have fallen apart and the centre cannot hold. Anybody remembers that quote from Chinua Achebe?*

Student S: *I think he was just trying to blame Prof Maurice for the things he had been taught perhaps about hard work and dedication to duty.*

Facilitator: So he is just finding out that the loyalty did not pay. Was he really loyal?

Student D: Yes he was, but to the company he sacrificed his family and personal life for.

Student N: I think he was just loyal as long as he was promoted

Student I: I agree, I think he was driven more by self, than by interest in the company

Student W: I think loyalty is usually conditional; you are loyal to others because you have expectations of them.

Facilitator: So, that is, 'loyalty is contractual. I give, you give'. Does everybody agree?

Class: Nooooo

Student M: No, if you are loyal, you would do things you are not rewarded for. From the case, we cannot see that he developed anybody

Facilitator: Do you think if he did this he would have mentioned it?

Class: Yes.

Facilitator: So loyalty is about going above and beyond the expected. But in an organisation, can you be selfless? There must be an interest you are pursuing.

In the discussion on loyalty, the class was again divided in two camps. One side thought that loyalty should be selfless, while the other group thought that it should be contractual and transactional. Some people felt that although loyalty is not contractual, it is something that must endure in good and not so good times. According to them, Benjamin had been happy so far only because he has been promoted and things have been going well till the present situation, but he backs down at the first sign of adversity. However, the overall feeling was that Benjamin did not develop anybody at all, throughout the period of his successes.

Student E: I disagree that this is Benjamin's first adversity, and I don't think his loyalty should be judged based on this one adversity, because it may have been the height of things.

Student N: Ben appears self centred and I feel that he was unable to develop people; he would not be able to sell the vision of the company to others. He would not be able to carry people along.

Facilitator: Can we say that being so driven to sacrifice for the company, Ben lacks empathy, and he might drive other people to same sacrifice, and that we might also see an increase in the number of divorces?

Class: Yes.

Facilitator: from the case, we see that his sensitivity to others is very low. He is promoted above his colleagues and he feels very good about it. Now with that motivation structure, can he really build a team?

Class: Noooo!

Facilitator: He will most likely use people to get to where he wants to be. There therefore is the question of whether or not Ben is a destructive achiever. Research was done on reasons for managerial turnover in Nigeria, and the two most important variables that emerged were Managerial Style and Perceived Organisational Support.

Now this makes sense in our culture, doesn't it?

Class: Yes.

*Facilitator: Because in our culture, **caring** counts, and some of us come to the organisation expecting these things.*

From the above, it can be deduced that majority of this class thought that Benjamin Brookes would not have made an effective leader because;

- He was blindly ambitious in his quest to succeed in his career, even at the expense of his family relationships

- He did not appear to have developed or mentored anyone in particular
- Lacked loyalty and did not appear to value inter-personal skills, nor was he relationship driven
- He was perceived as self-centred and lacking natural empathy, particularly with regard to his work and family life balance.

Overall, this seemed to suggest that consideration for others was seen as a particularly important leadership virtue to have. In Benjamin's case, his *selfishness*, the observed *lack of regard for family ties*, and a perceived *inability to care* were key factors that apparently disqualified him from providing good leadership; because as clearly remarked;

'... in our culture, caring counts, and some of us come to the organization expecting these things'

What this apparently connotes is a strong correlation with the African traditional philosophy of *Ubuntu*. In its fundamental allusion to survival, *ubuntu* is essentially collectivist in orientation, and is underpinned by core leadership values of *care*, *empathy*, *community* and *brotherhood* (Mphahlele, 2002; Mbigi, 2005).

Apparently, this was an environment in which interaction was encouraged; but again, in considering why this indigenous Business School would primarily adapt the use of Harvard Case Studies, I believe that in many ways, it could still be seen as a consequence of western idealism. Harvard Business School is considered among the best in the world, it is therefore possible that the more closely

associated this school was with it, the higher patronage it would receive from members of an elite that were arguably, highly westernized or so oriented. Indeed, one wonders if it might not have been more helpful to generate local business case studies considering that the present intervention (and others like it at LBS) was primarily about developing leadership capability for the Nigerian corporate market.

In their pedagogical analysis on the use of case studies, Gabriel and Connell (2010) have stated that ‘business case studies, pioneered at the Harvard Business School, are known to recount *real life* business situations... (p.511). As such, if these were real life situations that supposedly mirrored the reality of US society, then it is plausible to question the significance of such context specific accounts in showcasing the reality of a Nigerian business dilemma.

It is thought that locally generated business case studies would have better captured the unique complexities of this particular terrain, within which the leadership knowledge was to be applied. Again, if we say that leadership development should be embodied in a form that is recognizable by the intending user (Kelly et al, 2006), one wonders what was contextually recognizable from the narrative of an American business case, or perhaps what experiential frames of reference (Goffman, 1986) might have been identifiable from this. While these cases may have seemed appealing and perhaps interesting to debate, it is possible that beyond that, there was not much that intrinsically captured the contextual complexity of the average Nigerian business, vis-à-vis the uncertainties often characteristic of an emerging market.

Be that as it may, findings also suggest that from the debates in class, some behavioural gaps were deduced from these cases. For instance, Erik was seen as lacking assertiveness in his display of leadership behaviour. What this suggests is that although the cases were not generated in the context of the local, it is possible that they might have had some teaching value, particularly as they helped to stimulate discussions from which participants' implicit expectations of leadership were subsequently identified. Again, what this infers is that whatever contextual gaps there might have been within the case studies, the presence of these may have helped facilitate a discovery of what values were 'missing'.

For instance, if *assertiveness* was an implicit leadership paradigm that participants brought to the classroom, it remained implicit until it was confronted with leadership behaviour to the contrary, and then an interactive learning environment would enable the discussions from within which this paradigm could readily be identified. Therefore, it is possible that within an enabling interactive environment, the use of contextually different case studies might lead to the identification of contextual gaps, which could then be used as a diagnostic tool for development. Possibly, this may be why LBS had chosen to take this route. Nevertheless, the significant absence of local business case studies on this module was a nagging question that persistently threw up the issue of a conscious complicity in the propagation of western idealism.

5.7.5 Exploring Content – Leadership and Self Concepts

In addition to the case studies, much of the theoretical course content was centred on Self Development as a key determinant or pre-requisite for effective leadership. In this, the various elements that constituted personal leadership were

presented during the formal class sessions, and the theoretical frameworks engaged with on this programme are particularly addressed in the first interview question. In exploring participants' understanding of the taught material, interviewees were asked to discuss their understanding of the *Self Concepts* and how they perceived this in relation to effective leadership. Following a step-by-step phenomenological analysis as detailed in Chapter 3 of this thesis (See sections 3.4.1), key emerging themes are outlined in this next section and additionally, excerpts from the course material are presented below. In these, it was further observed that the LBS logo bore a noticeable semblance to that of the Harvard Business School.



Personal Leadership

- Self Knowledge
- Self Efficacy
- Self Esteem
- Self Mastery
- Self Development




- "An unexamined life is not worth living"
 - Greek Philosopher
- Know Thyself
- To thyself be true




Leading Self

- "Cultivate a deep understanding of yourself .. Your strengths and weaknesses, how you learn, how you work with others, what your values are, and where you can make the greatest contribution"
Peter Drucker (2005)




Discover Yourself

- Use feedback to improve yourself
 - Johari's Window
- What are your strengths?
- What knowledge gaps do you have?





Fig 5.3 Content

In addition to the case studies, which constituted a relatively large part of the programme, other aspects of the theoretical content were focused mainly on the development of the individual. However, findings do not particularly indicate that the leadership development module in this case was definitely a traditional pre-packaged solution to a predetermined problem (Kelly et al 2006; Ladkin et al, 2009). This is because there was relatively more time spent on informal class discussions of business case studies than there was on traditional impartation of programme content, and in this, learning appeared far more interactive than it was instructive.

Nevertheless, the one thing that seemed problematic about the programme content was the lack of local contextual business case studies. It is not known if this was due to unavailability of such materials, but from the observation findings so far, there is more to suggest that this was due to a deliberate preference for the Harvard style materials. Although there were two quotes from local thought

leaders, one a founding member of the LBS, and the other, its Chancellor. Besides these, there were no other examples/cases that could possibly have mirrored the cultural complexities and specificities that may be contextually associated with this social, economic and political terrain. This apparently lends credence to the claim that leadership development in Africa lacks contextual originality, and remains still tied to Eurocentric frameworks and western ways of being (Blunt and Jones, 1997; Obiakor, 2004; Adizes, 2007).

However, it is possible that local business case studies were unavailable, because as of this time, they were yet to be effectively documented. This may be due to the fact that the LBS was set up primarily as a teaching faculty to urgently address the situation of management education in Nigeria at the time. What this implies is that due to the exigencies of the time, there may have been far more attention initially given to the use of existing mainstream material than there necessarily was to the creation of new local content; which could possibly begin to explain the lack of documented contextual cases. In which case, this would appear to corroborate the assertion by Fougère and Moulettes (2011) that irrespective of where contemporary management education takes place, much of the theoretical material has mostly consisted of Anglo-American literature, often considered essential to the practice of management development.

Nevertheless, it is further likely that the lack of clearly articulated local content was not only facilitating an ideological dependency on western intellectual frameworks (Obiakor, 2004), but might have been increasingly detrimental to the development of any indigenous knowledge frameworks that may have been

needed to advance the cause of management development in this context (Jackson, 2004). Indeed, if LBS continued to depend on Harvard Case Studies in the course of leadership development, there was the likelihood that a sustained absence of critical contextual frameworks would amount to at best, abstract learning; because there were no local examples or instances advanced in class, with which to sufficiently contextualise or ground the learning. Even if we say that these materials did have some teaching value, I argue that the sustained absence of local knowledge frameworks was likely to hinder any useful opportunities for contextual learning. This is because as we see from the analysis of class case studies, the most that could occur from discussions on the Harvard case studies, was the evolution of a diagnostic framework, in which we saw the class diagnose the *absence* of certain values; e.g. assertiveness, in the case of Erik Peterson. My point is that as long as western case studies were solely engaged to the detriment of local contextual ones, it appeared that this was as far as the learning would get; mainly because there were no articulated local cases to sufficiently enable comparison, make contextual sense, and as such, progressively ground the learning. This is especially pertinent, given the fact that effective leadership development is one that should make sense to the intending user, who is going to practice it, within the context in which they live (Ladkin et al., 2009).

The following section presents the analysis of interview data, particularly the themes that have emerged during the course of data analysis.

5.8 Findings from Interviews

5.8.1 *Question 1: What were participants' 'constructions' of leadership on this module?*

The results for this section derive mainly from interview data. The findings analysed in this section are from responses to this first interview question. For the purpose of this question, the *self concepts* have been adapted for discussion, because this formed the core of theoretical engagement on the module and was treated on a more detailed level in class. Below are the strongest themes that emerged in response to this; analysis follows after thematic listing.

In analysing the interview responses to this first question, it was observed that although people mostly tended to agree with the development of self in the pursuit of leadership, this was often perceived and interpreted more in light of the collective. There was the overall feeling that leadership was about 'knowing and understanding yourself in order to know your strengths and build on them', but the knowledge of the self was not always seen as primarily beneficial to the individual and for the development of his/her capacity, but equally for the development of the community, and as some clearly remarked 'for the greater good'. In this, it seemed that the concept of self and personhood was largely enshrined within a broader concept of community. This is because concepts such as self knowledge and self mastery were consistently interpreted in the light of how this knowledge would ultimately benefit others. Below are some excerpts from the interviews,

'Knowing yourself is critical to helping others build themselves. You need to build yourself first before you can build others'. (CS2013, Male, Age 27)

'Leadership is all about mastering your self. It's about coming to terms with your shortcomings, sitting on your demons, so that you can have good interpersonal relationships. It comes with bestowment of authority, but it comes with a responsibility. Self mastery is important because it helped me to get a grip on myself and I am able to approach issues in an amicable way that is beneficial to all'
(CS2001, Male, Age 25)

'It starts with learning to lead from within... You need to know what your strengths are and how you can lead. You can't be blindly ambitious; you'll just be an accident waiting to happen. (CS2022, female, Age 30)

'It is about the way you relate with people... leadership goes way beyond being a very sharp bright guy upstairs. Exceptionally bright people are often lost in themselves...techies, but when it comes to leadership, it's a different ball game' (CS2009, Male, Age 25).

Mostly, people appeared to see the self concepts as more of a platform for the development of the collective. On the surface, this appears congruent with the theory of differentiation and integration, i.e. building individual capacity, in order to develop social capital (Hall and Seibert, 1992). Therefore, it is thought that the individual is first developed in order to build social capacity. But beyond that, this seems much more consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of ubuntu; because the ultimate end emphasized here is the *benefit to others* and for *the greater good*. Ubuntu rests on the traditional assumption that man exists because the community exists, i.e. 'I am, because we are' (Malunga, 2006; Mbigi, 2005), and the thread of *community* that subtly underpins these responses cannot be fleetingly ignored. Therefore, in this case, it is noted that the self theories were mostly interpreted in the light of the *benefit to others*, indicating a community orientation that seems clearly consistent with the fundamental paradigms of *ubuntu*.

Secondly, there was a relatively high degree of connectivity between knowledge and experience on the one hand, and leadership perception on the other. People felt that the more knowledgeable and experienced you were, the more suitably qualified you were to lead. This is consistent with earlier research findings from perceptions of leadership in Africa (See Turnbull, 2009). Participants mostly felt that knowing and leading yourself was a function of having built up experience that others could trust and count on to lead them. It was felt that this was critical to building trust, confidence as well as inter-personal relationships. Some participants remarked

'...You must first lead from within, before translating to leading others. People can see that you have travelled that route before, and they would want to be led by you because they trust and are confident that you can navigate the course'. (CS2016, Male, Age 28)

'You have to know your onions, you need some technical skills on the job itself, as that would earn you respect. You have to know yourself, because it would give you an edge in dealing with people. Your interpersonal skills are crucial because we live in an informal world. You need to have established some credibility' (CS2007, female, Age 25)

I believe that the above is largely indicative of the leadership premium placed on age in many African societies, because it is mostly seen as being synonymous with wisdom and experience (Malunga, 2005). Indeed, as has been earlier noted 'leadership is like wine, it must mature' (See Turnbull, 2009). If this is the case, i.e. if indeed knowledge and experience are critical to effective leadership in this instance, and if we say that knowledge is contextually and culturally contingent, then what this implicitly points to is a call for more contextually knowledgeable leadership. Therefore, findings from this case study appear to suggest a need for more contextually and culturally sensitive models of leadership/leadership development, that are fundamentally underpinned by the knowledge required for the establishment of successful leadership relationships and experiences in this context.

In the course of examining responses to this first question, a particularly important finding had to do with a perceived lack of critical engagement. Indeed, there weren't many noticeably critical or challenging views offered in the course of engagement with the self concepts. While this did not initially pose any problems, as participants had mostly interpreted these in the light of collective benefit; after some time, this lack of questioning began to seem rather significant. This is because I realised that the responses had been mostly prescriptively accepted, rather than critically examined. That is, no one had seemed to offer up any critical perspectives that called these concepts to question. However, this was with the exception of two individuals who didn't seem to think that self mastery was critical to effective leadership. Overall, there didn't seem to be any particularly questioning or challenging views. The problem was that it all seemed accepted, even if only interpreted in a slightly different way.

Again, I find myself wondering if this is not a form of pedagogical disempowerment, one that could really begin to explain the lack of critical theoretical frameworks on the subject of management and leadership development in Africa (see Jackson, 2004, Nkomo, 2008).

Scholars write that management education in Africa is still tied to colonial euro-centric frameworks and fundamentally characterized by an intellectual hegemony that has occasioned an ideological dependency on the west and stifled local creativity (Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi, 2005). It appears that in this instance, this might have been the case, especially considering that the leadership development module in question noticeably bore large cultural imprints from American society (Prasad, 1997, 2003).

In light of this, it is possible that the prescriptive frameworks of colonial education in Nigeria (See above, Metz, 1991) may have systematically undermined the ability to challenge, to critically question, and subsequently to evolve alternative ways of being; a situation not especially helped by a growing romanticization of western idealism by the social elite, who arguably possessed the socio-economic and intellectual power to effect this change. It is believed that this offshoot from colonial times, coupled with a growing decline in the Nigerian educational system and the lack of adequate research facilities (Yesufu, 1996; Oni, 2000), may have endemically sustained this anomaly.

Furthermore, it appears that in this case, this was possibly a mere enactment of a systemic failure. It is possible that the romanticized notion of an ‘internationally recognized’ business school may have been presently aiding participants’ seeming incapacity to be constructively critical, or at least, so it seemed. To many, LBS is a first class provider of contemporary management education, ranked on the FT tables and with very strong ties to Europe; reasons for which it is again, especially courted by the elite, by the *crème* of corporate Nigeria and for which most participants enrolled on this prestigious programme would be considered privileged to be here. Therefore, I argue that for all of the above reasons, coupled with the indigenous complicity cited above, knowledge presented and taught in this place was highly likely to be received and adopted uncritically. Because this was widely considered as ‘quality teaching’ and ‘good education’ in a system riddled with all the afore-mentioned complexities, any theoretical frameworks advanced here were likely to be adopted far more prescriptively than critically. From the findings before me, it appeared that this dynamic had grossly interfered

with participants' capacity to be critical; that is, to be questioning of what seemed the theoretical status quo or mainstream.

However, analyses of the interviews on real life contextual experiences reveal a slight variation and this is explored in the next few paragraphs.

5.8.2 Question 2: What were participants' experiences of leadership in their context?

Primarily, this question was geared towards exploring participant experiences of leadership in order to unravel what their implicit expectations of leadership really were. In other words, this question sought to find out – what were the hidden expectations of leadership that participants may have carried over from 'lived' contextual experiences *of* leadership? What values of leadership had they (un)consciously internalized over the course of their contextualized real life experiences of leadership? I was looking to examine these in the light of their knowledge 'constructions' from the programme, and hopefully to see what the variances or similarities were, and analytically proffer explanations for these. If we say that our experiences of leadership are contextual, and that these are what shape our values and expectations of the same, then it followed that I could look to participant experience to uncover implicit and hidden values and expectations of leadership which were not immediately observable. This is why I could not rely solely on the data from observation in my study, I had to go beneath what was seen and said at surface level, I had to unearth what was not 'seen' or immediately heard.

In responding to the second interview question, people spoke freely about a memorable experience of leadership which they had had, particularly on the aspects that they personally considered to be hallmarks of good leadership, and for which this experience was seen as memorable. As earlier hoped, these recounted experiences of leadership, together with the memorable aspects of them, would reveal the participants' expectations of what could be considered 'good' or 'acceptable' leadership, and therefore, what might make for effective leadership development within this context. This is due to the belief that since these experiences had mostly occurred within this socio-cultural reality, then they had unconsciously been framed by the various cultural and contextual influences that impinged upon this particular environment (Hofstede, 1980; Goffman, 1986). What this means is that such experiences had over time become participants' frames of reference with respect to their perceptions of leadership, which in turn had shaped their expectations of this phenomenon. However, it is recalled that for some respondents, what had made the recounted leadership experiences memorable was the fact that they had been perceived and experienced as 'negative'. In such instances, the unfulfilled desires of those 'bad' encounters were what these respondents dwelt on during their discussions, and which subsequently provided insight into their true expectations of good and effective leadership.

The interviews on real life contextual experiences reveal an interesting dynamic. In this, there seemed to be something of a slight variation between the social construction of what was learnt in class, and the lived experience in context. The thing about 'building yourself first before others' came strongly through in

responses to the first question. However, the desire for *care*, *empathy* and often, *selflessness* as participants' expectations of effective leadership is a strong thread that ran consistently through the experiential accounts. This is evidenced below from the major themes that have emerged through the phenomenological analysis of interview data. This was done by applying a phenomenological framework to data analysis through the use of Hycner's guidelines previously outlined in section 3.4 of this thesis. In employing this step-by-step analytical process, the following themes were identified and based on the patterns of occurrence, have been classified into major and minor themes.

Major Themes

- Showed *care* and had *empathy* (Paternal/Maternal)
- Was Virtuous – possessed *humility*, *patience* and *listened*
- Was *mature* and *experienced*
- Carried others along (i.e. was *approachable*, with reduced social power distances)
- Was *not dictatorial* or *overtly authoritarian*
- Was *accountable*
- Was *exemplary* (That is, led by example)

Minor Themes

- Fostered *creativity* and allowed for *space to grow*
- Was *Innovative*
- Developed others and left a successor

Below are some of the interview quotes that highlight the above;

1. Leadership is not self seeking, but it ‘carries others along’

‘My secondary school teacher was a good example of leadership because he had a way of taking everybody along. He wasn’t a wicked person. He was strict but friendly..., he was very approachable... a good coach. He made us relax and made everything very simple. He changed our mindsets, brought the vision down, and made us able to achieve it easily. He was very caring. Leadership is about patience, about virtues and about character. It’s all about character... care and love for others’. (CS2002, Male, Age 30)

‘My group leader...has kept us motivated, and has been able to carry people along. He has been able to manage a very critical set of people and is not afraid to take criticism from them. My Pastor also, is a man of depth. Back then, he was always full of new ideas. Everything he brought was always fresh and that to me, i.e. innovation is a very big thing. He always had results to show, and he was a very hard worker.’ (CS2017, female, Age 28)

'You should be able to carry your team members along... make them feel like one. It's more than a position and it's more than the individual'. (CS2021, Male, Age 33)

'Leadership is also about carrying people along because people need to be happy working with you'. (CS2004, Male, Age 31)

'Leadership is about involving everybody; it's about carrying people along. If you are a leader and nobody's following you, then you are just taking a walk!' (CS2019, female, Age 29)

2. Leadership shows 'care and empathy'

'In my experience, I..., a leader should care, a leader should empathise and try and see things from the other person's perspective. You need to be able to wear people's shoes sometimes'. (CS2024, female, Age 27)

'My pastor was a great leader. He affected my life, because of his great love and his simplicity. He didn't just preach it, he lived it.' (CS2003, Male, Age 33)

'My mum for me is a great leadership example. For me, I think it really starts with the family background. My mum is

a typical house wife and when she met and married my father, she was a working class lady with the CBN. But when she had us, my father requested that she put all on hold to look after us, and she did. Today, she says that she has not had any cause to regret that decision, because when she looks at her children, she knows she did the right thing. After my brother graduated, she went back to working and started a business. When I lost my daughter last month, she packed up everything and came to be by me. She has been a great role model to me and also an example because when I find myself wanting to achieve so many things, I always remind myself that family life comes first. When my sister had a baby, she was off to Aberdeen to help. For me, it's about care. I ask her why she does all these things, and she says that it's to set an example for me to follow, to care for others.' (CS2029, female, Age 32)

'We had this team leader on the project. He was able to delegate the tasks effectively and this helped us to finish on time. Another thing about him was that he was able to understand people and how each personality here worked. He understood people's personal circumstances and could work around them, so everyone was happy to be part of the group' (CS2008, Male, Age 29)

'One person stands out for me, it's my Pastor. He tells it as it is and is not afraid to say 'I have weaknesses'. He shows care and also does things for the society as well, there is a prison ministry which he oversees, and there are also youth programmes that empower the youth. He is an example. He has understood himself and has also helped people to understand who they are. He is interested in raising great leaders, in growing people. You just go to church and you see stars around you that he has helped nurture and grow. It's not enough to be a good leader; it's about ensuring continuity in leadership.' (CS2017, female, Age 28)

3. Leadership is 'patient' and 'listens'

'I once worked with a consulting company and I liked my boss because she was always monitoring my work. People could call it micromanaging, but I saw it as 'she wants to help me'. She always listened to me and was open to my ideas. I saw her as very humble because of the way she spoke to us and always said thank you, even when it was you asking for help. I loved her leadership style, she was a listener. She knew we were new and she was always ready to help. And when she did my appraisal, she asked me for my own views. She was a listener, she was humble, she cared about my work, and she was open to criticism and ideas. She was also very polite in her manner. She was

always helping us and was interested in my work welfare.

She was also a hard worker.’ (CS2015, female, Age 26)

A leader should be open to learning and listening to people.

A good leader should first be a good follower, you need to

know how it feels to be one; it helps you to reflect. In class

we talked about you having your personal retreat in order

to carry out self-evaluation, and I agree with this.’ (CS2026,

female, Age not disclosed)

‘Patience is especially crucial to leadership. You need to be

a listener and hear people’s side of the story. I had a leader

in school who knew how to carry people along. He was

happy to share the limelight and made sure that everyone

had something to contribute, even though he was able to do

everything by himself. He was level headed and comported,

not aggressive. He was humble, was patient and understood

where everyone was coming from. He had natural empathy

for others’ (CS2010, Male, Age 30)

4. Leadership is ‘mature’ and ‘experienced’

‘In my group we chose a leader because she was the only

married person in the group with a kid. We felt she was

mature enough to lead us. It has been worth it because it’s

not dictatorial, but she listens and gets people’s buy-in. She

had also established her credibility and people just naturally listened to her and we respected her views. She was motherly and showed care. She's assertive. She's always putting others first and is selfless, and for me this is important in leadership.' (CS2018, female, Age 26)

'In our group we are almost like one, we are a family and we care and trust each other. A leader should be tolerant. She has a way of being firm, while being accommodating. She's older than most of us and really mature. She knew how to nicely mediate between feuding parties without being seen to take sides.' (CS2011, female, Age 25)

As seen from the above, most of the themes emerging from the analysis of interview responses to this second question centred mainly on values of care, empathy, sacrifice, experience and maturity. It is observed that none of these appeared to remotely align with concepts of self theory or with any of the individualist notions of leadership taught in the course of the leadership module. Rather, these seem to be more in line with the values expressed in some of the traditional African philosophies. For instance Leadership as 'showing care and empathy' is one theme that appears to be consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of *Ubuntu*. As previously noted, *Ubuntu* is underscored by the notion of social sensitivity and personal responsibility for the well-being of others.

Furthermore, themes of effective leadership as ‘approachable’, as ‘carrying others along’ and as ‘listening’ are seemingly at odds with the classification of African Culture as one with a High Power Distance (Hofstede, 1980; 1991). As we see in this case, people tended to associate a positively memorable leadership experience with having been led by someone who was easily approached, who listened to others and that was able to carry other group members along. In this case, it might seem that ‘listening to others’ and ‘carrying people along’ is indicative of a more consultative leadership approach in which the views of others are solicited and taken into account. This view is further echoed by the theme of positive leadership as being neither *dictatorial* nor *overtly authoritarian* and again, this is consistent with the earlier observation by Jackson (2004) that African leadership may not be as autocratic and despotic as recent studies would have us believe but that in this, there might indeed be a preference for a more consultative approach.

A close look at the theme of leadership as being *accountable*, *honest* and *with integrity* reveals an interesting similarity with Boon’s concept of *interactive leadership* (Boon, 1996) or what he describes as ‘leadership, the African way’. This is because interactive leadership or leadership the African way fundamentally espouses values of *honesty*, *accountability* and *integrity* as an important foundation for effective leadership in traditional African communities.

Again, leadership as ‘mature and experienced’ is in line with the traditional reverence usually ascribed to age in many parts of Africa. Often believed to be synonymous with wisdom (Malunga, 2006), age is traditionally viewed as a sign of a person’s maturity and hence an indication of their having accumulated the

experiential capital required to be able to lead others (Mazrui, 1970; Turnbull, 2009). A representation of this can be found in ‘the council of elders’ present in the ruling systems of many traditional African societies, who are often seen as custodians of tradition and vested with the responsibility of maintaining effective leadership and governance in line with established cultural norms. For instance, *the Oyomesi* among the Yoruba people of Oyo in Western Nigeria are a traditional council of chiefs and kingmakers, who are charged with the responsibility of selecting the next *Alaafin* or King in line with established customary procedures, particularly in a society where the system of monarchy is not necessarily hereditary (Lola and Akinrinade, 1985; Oyewumi, 1998; Oguntomisin, 2002).

However, it might appear that in this case, the tendency towards a strong community orientation is perhaps more indicative of *collectivism*, a dimension that has been frequently associated with culture in African Society. Nevertheless, this appears stretched to what could be described in more practical terms, as a sense of *community*. It can be argued that in this case, the tendency to a strong community orientation is neither reflective of individualism, nor can it be simplistically described as entirely collectivist in nature; but that leaning significantly towards the latter, it goes beyond this to a much deeper engagement with community, visibly underscored by a sense of duty or obligation on the part of the individual, as in *I am, because we are*.

As earlier discussed, participants’ constructions and conceptualizations of the above were mostly in light of developing *others* and *collective benefit* to the organization or community. In this case, it seemed that leadership development

wasn't necessarily about developing the person, but more about building the community as represented by the person; because in this case, the person represented the community. That is, the person was not necessarily there for him/her self, but primarily on account of the community. Therefore *the person is, because the community is*; and this is further reflective of the traditional values expressed in *ubuntu*. Malunga (2005) writes that in many traditional African societies, an individual was usually groomed from childhood to become an adult who would contribute beneficially to the development of the clan and wider society, and that their value as a person was often measured in terms of their social relevance to the immediate community. It is also recalled that during the colonial era in Nigeria, families who could not afford to pay the relatively high school fees required for formal education, would often pool their resources together to 'train' one member of the family, because it was expected that the person would in turn, train other members of the family, upon the completion of his/her education, after securing employment in the new wage system (See Metz, 1991). Therefore, the individual 'went to school' to gain education for subsequent employment, so that he/she could return and help others through the same route. *Indeed, in my own personal experience as a growing child in Nigeria, I can recollect overhearing passing references to certain relatives who were branded as 'ungrateful' and 'selfish', because they had used up family resources in 'going to school' and had refused to 'train' younger family members; and I can specifically recall this as a major source of conflict in my own extended family. In many cases, these were male family members, and often time, their wives were seen as responsible for the refusal of their husbands to 'train' their younger siblings in school.*

For many in Nigerian society, this sort of ‘help’ was considered necessary and most times, obligatory upon the individual. In this, it was often about survival in the face of hardship, particularly in times when focus was increasingly shifting from rural farming, fishing and trade, to western formal education. Chinuoaya (2007) writes that the central tenet of ubuntu rests fundamentally on issues of *community*, *brotherhood* and of *survival* in the face of economic hardship and difficult circumstances; particularly in deprived African communities where resources are often scarce and the survival of the clan is a paramount concern.

In this case study no doubt occurring in a chronologically different context, it seemed particularly interesting that the theoretical constructs of self theory had been mostly interpreted in light of their *benefit* to the broader community, and in terms of the capacity to *help* others. While this does not in any way lay claims to a generality, as the scope of this study is way too limited to imply this, findings from this study indicate a possible contextual dissonance between western functionalist paradigms of leadership (Blunt and Jones, 1997) that seem ‘obsessed’ with the science of self (Jones, 2006) on the one hand; and the interpretations, perceptions and expectations of leadership that participants brought to this case, on the other. In this, it is observed that so far, the latter have appeared more consistent with the philosophy of *ubuntu* than with any of the individualist functionalist notions encountered in the course of the research.

However, it must be said that the contextual dissonance in this case was not necessarily observed as a ‘negative’ thing. This is because as can be seen from earlier discussions, the class analysis of non-contextual case studies did seem to

possess some diagnostic value, mainly because they stimulated dynamic class interactions from which observably, implicit paradigms and values of leadership appeared to unconsciously flow. The only problem with this was that this was where it had stopped. I believe that had local case studies been present, the resulting interactions could have been far more critical and the learning, much more contextually grounded. Furthermore, the discussions could have been better harnessed and channelled towards the design of more culturally sensitive leadership development models which would be fundamentally recognizing of the contextual complexities that attend this particular terrain, and better navigate the challenges therein. It is thought that these could possibly form the basis for the development of local theoretical frameworks necessary for societal advancement; in which case, the use of non-contextual case studies would assume a far more critically constructive and comparative approach, rather than the functionalist and ideologically prescriptive manner, in which they are presently deployed.

On a final note, it is necessary to state that rather than attempt to generalise, the above discussions are mainly reflective of findings from this case, and as such, it is not possible to wholly infer what the picture might be in other MBA settings. That is, one cannot immediately determine whether or not these results would be replicated in a similar study of leadership education within other MBA cohorts elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless, if we consider that a significant proportion of the learning content in international management education is believed to come from Anglo-American textbooks (Fougère and Moulettes, 2011), then one can reasonably expect learning materials to be similar in other learning contexts (also drawing on Blunt and Jones' (1997) observation that one can expect any self-respecting MBA graduate in South-East Asia or Latin America to know broadly

the same things about leadership and management). However, what might be different is how participants from these other regions choose to negotiate this knowledge in light of the socio-cultural contexts that they inhabit and within which they must make meaning, even as they seek to construct their own understandings of leadership and leadership development.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.1 Knowing Leadership in Context

As the body of knowledge on Leadership Development continues to grow, the calls for more contextualized theory and praxis abound. In viewing leadership as a *situated practice* (Fiedler, 1976), earnest mention of the need for more culturally centred models of leadership development has been made (Obiakor, 2004, Jackson 2004, Mbigi, 2005). A major argument around this has centred on the importance of mental programs and the construction of ‘meaning’ within socio-cultural reality. This argument hinges on the assumption that we know in context, and that our understanding of social phenomena has been influenced by our mental programs, values and beliefs. What this seemingly implies is that whatever claims we may lay to the understanding of leadership as a social phenomenon, these have been continually shaped and moulded by our thought processes, interactions and experiences within socio-cultural reality, all of which have served to reinforce one another. This is because our thought processes usually inform our social interactions, and these dynamic interactions with one another are what may subsequently form the basis for our experiences. These experiences are what then shape our expectations and over time, provide the *frames* for our terms of reference (Goffman, 1986). Therefore, given that ‘leadership’ as a social phenomenon is understood within the context in which it occurred; it is firmly argued that any knowledge we advance about leadership is fundamentally contextual.

It has also been earlier argued that *context* is itself shaped by the situated cultural forces (House et al, 2004; Haarmann, 2007) that impinge on it. It therefore goes without saying that any knowledge shaped within this would bear the cultural imprints of the context within which it has been constructed (Prasad, 1997, 2003). What this means is that not only is knowledge about leadership contextual, it is culturally contingent, and therefore mirrors the cultural characteristics of the environment within which it was generated. In light of the above, it has been necessary to examine what goes on within the learning spaces of contemporary leadership development programmes. This is because since leadership knowledge is contextual and culturally contingent, it is believed that leadership development cannot be divorced from the environment within which it is to be deployed (Hamilton and Bean, 2005), and again, for leadership development to be effective, it should first of all be recognizable by those who must practice it (Kelly et al, 2006, Ladkin et al, 2009). However, re-cognition is itself contingent on cognition – or *knowing*, and it is believed that for leadership development engagement to be worthwhile, that which is presented as leadership knowledge should understandably echo certain contextual features and cultural imprints which are recognizable and that ‘make sense’ to the intending user in the context that they inhabit and within which they must practice this leadership.

Furthermore, the understanding of leadership as ‘a situated practice’ (Fiedler, 1976) would logically foreclose the possibility of a universal approach to leadership development. Even ‘the dilemma of leadership’ itself bellies a theoretical confusion that is visibly at odds with the idea of a ‘global leadership development’ approach. The fact that ‘there are many definitions of leadership as

those who have attempted to define it' (Stodgill, 1970, p.) and the assertion that there is no universal truth about leadership (Billsberry, 2009) coupled with the realisation that leadership is a process of reality construction that is grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), meaning different things to different people (Gill, 2006; p.7), all serve to strengthen the argument that the practical 'development' of such a theoretically elusive construct as *leadership* cannot and should not attempt to assume a universalist or globalizing tendency.

Again, the situated nature of leadership carries with it important questions for the practice of contemporary leadership development, particularly for the use of western case studies in the Nigerian context researched. This is because the 'situatedness' of leadership practice is itself suggestive of a contextual dynamic, and as we know, situations vary across space and time. If this is the case, it is problematic to assume that what is meaningful in a particular situation, will be in another, and this is what contemporary leadership development based on mainstream western ideology and experience such as those observed in both case studies may be trying to achieve. If indeed leadership is situated, the question of 'how we can know what elements of a particular leadership situation to teach or learn' becomes a really difficult one. Thus, if we say that leadership is a situated practice, then it follows that whatever 'development' that is contingent on this is an even more situated one, for as we have been told, leadership development 'must make sense' to the intending user (Ladkin et al, 2009). In this, it goes without saying that 'sense-making' is situated, for as has been argued, *we know in context*.

6.2 Social Constructions of Leadership Development

Therefore, it is argued that effective leadership development cannot authentically assume a one-size-fits-all approach. In analyzing results from the two case studies, I argued that at an institutional level, both assumed a mainstream universalism rather than a contextual orientation in their engagement with leadership development praxis. Not only were the learning materials used drawn from mainstream or, in this case ‘western’ literature, the case studies employed had been mostly derived from contemporary US society. What this suggests for both cases, and for others like them, is that while assuming a universalising tendency, contemporary approaches to leadership development remain largely ethnocentric, rooted in western ideology and experience. Again, as can be seen from this study, such ethnocentrism is visibly underscored by the finding that the major source of all learning materials employed on both programmes, lay in the stables of European and North American scholarship. In light of our earlier argument that knowledge is contextually constructed and consequently, culturally contingent; it follows that these logically carried cultural imprints from the societies from which they had been transposed (Prasad, 1997). If indeed this is the case, the degree of familiarity or recognisability of these to the programme participants in both cases remains in question, especially if we consider that findings reflect several perspectives that appear significantly variant from what is considered mainstream.

6.2.1 Comparing both Study Populations

In comparing both study populations, there are a number of similarities and differences that may have significantly impacted the outcome of the research. However, in observing the above, the similarities seem to have been outweighed

by the differences between them. In respect of composition, both populations were relatively alike, being mainly comprised of programme participants engaged with building leadership capacity. Again, in terms of similarity, all of these were young Africans aged between 18 and 33 years old. Although not absolutely necessary, this was helpful in maintaining some degree of uniformity across the research audience, even if only at a very basic level. What this meant was that although not essentially uniform, both of these sample populations were topically relevant to the research and therefore could be reasonably expected to 'speak' significantly to the study thus generating new data and help facilitate new insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Nevertheless, both populations were different in a number of ways. While that of YouthOrg was made up of all female volunteers, the LBS population was mixed and comprised of both men and women. Secondly, the former consisted of participants drawn from the non-profit sector who had been nominated to attend an in-house LD programme, which was free to them, while the latter were members of the corporate sector enrolled on a relatively expensive (for leadership development) MBA programme for which they had been mostly self-funded. The consequence of this is that while participants on the second programme were likely to be more confident and expressive in voicing their opinions, having been more financially invested in the programme and therefore with an arguably higher level of expectation, those on the first programme had been nominated and funded by the organisation to attend. As such, it can be argued that they were less likely to be openly critical or expressive of this, being more in a position of beneficiary, than they were of the customer; a situation that could also have impacted on the research findings, one of which included the tendency to be less vocal.

Furthermore, while participants in YouthOrg were drawn from various African countries to the various learning sites in Europe, those from LBS were all from within the same Nigerian society in which the learning took place. In this, it is possible that while the former were learning away from home and might have had to adjust to what was relatively unfamiliar environment and to various other participants from different parts of the world, a situation which may have been to a certain degree, rather guarded; the latter were in this case learning at home and therefore in a more familiar setting within which they were relatively more relaxed and may have had fewer adjustments to make.

6.2.2 Social Constructions of Leadership Development - LBS

For instance, in view of the *strong community orientation* observed in the Nigerian case study, leadership development was socially constructed as *building the community through the person* or *building self for others*. In this, major themes centred on leadership development as learning

- For *the greater good*
- To make *personal sacrifice*
- To *carry others* along
- To bear *collective* responsibility
- To promote values of *empathy, accountability* and *maturity*

In this case, *developing self for others* or for *the greater good* seemingly infers a more collectivist orientation than an individualist one. To *carry others along* implies a consideration for the welfare of others that again is more inclined to

collectivism. Much as this appears collectivist-oriented, it seems to extend beyond merely building networks. This is because in this view, leadership development does not just end with equipping the person to achieve specific organizational ends, but is centrally concerned with socially empowering the community to exist in a way that is thought to be fair, just and equitable. That is, it is not merely seen as the building of social capital or relationships, but as the conscious considerate empowerment of the collective, through the person. In other words, leadership development in this context is centrally concerned with *developing me so I can go back and develop others, because I care*. I believe this is why the point of ‘carrying others along’ was repeatedly advanced during the interviews, and subsequently emerged as a major theme in the analysis of data. In this, leadership development seemed to carry an obligatory function; one that was indeed reminiscent of the period of formal education in the colonial era, in which people were expected to gain formal education, find gainful employment and return to ‘train’ other members of the family who could otherwise not afford the high fees (see Metz, 1991). It seems that this dynamic which appears remarkably consistent with the ‘collective survival in hardship’ orientation of *ubuntu* is one that may have unconsciously framed the social construction of leadership development in the Nigerian context. That is, the construction of leadership development seemed to involve a certain responsibility or obligation on the part of the individual to enhance the lives of others, as a direct consequence of having participated on an LDP. The observed rhetoric of leadership development as *developing me for others* is seemingly evidence of this assertion.

In this case, what this connotes is a preference for a leadership approach that espouses a keen consideration for the enablement and well-being of others as part

of its fundamental ethic. Consequently, what this might require for leadership development in this context is the need for it to mirror a stronger focus on community building through the development of a shared sense of collective responsibility for the growth and welfare of others. This extends beyond the view of leadership development as an instrument for navigating the uncertainty of change, solving the organisational dilemma or as being merely another pre-packaged training solution to a pre-determined problem (Kelly et al, 2006).

Another significant construction involved the perception of leadership development as building responsibility and developing maturity. This observation is consistent with the premium noticeably placed on *age* in many parts of Africa (Mazrui, 1970). In this view, leadership is like wine, which must mature (see Turnbull, 2009), and therefore leadership development must seek to mirror this core value in practice.

There were also implicit expectations of developing *empathy* as a core leadership virtue, since for many, leadership was much more than being ‘a sharp bright guy upstairs’ or ‘a techie’ but more of being a selfless and empathetic nature that could ‘carry everyone along’ irrespective of where they stood in the bigger picture.

As such, in this context, the practice of leadership development was expected to instil core values of *responsibility, empathy, maturity, accountability* and *sacrifice* (Grint, 2010) in those that would be seen as responsible for others. On a personal note, I find the point on *carrying others along* particularly noteworthy because of the tendency of contemporary LD approaches to identify ‘heroes’ or emphasize the idea of ‘strong male characters that can lead’ with a view to preparing these

for strategic leadership towards the achievement of specific organisational goals (see Prasad, 1997; Jones, 2006). What I find particularly interesting in this case is that rather than an instrumental preoccupation with the achievement of specific goals, leadership development seems more oriented towards equitable co-existence than it appears to be towards competitive advantage. Rather than *identifying the strong* or *a survival of the fittest*, there seemed to be more a focus on *covering the weakest*. That is, to ‘carry everyone along’ in a way that covered weak links (if any) and enabled a functional unified whole. I believe that this ties in with the focus on *empathy* and furthermore, with an underlying consciousness that ‘I am, *because we are*’.

However, this does not seek to imply the existence of a perfect world or of a stable society, as we know that this is far from the reality that is observed around us. Indeed, I present an extensive critique of such idealism in subsequent sections in this chapter. Nevertheless, I believe that this is more an exposition of the implicit leadership paradigms and expectations that lie beneath the rhetoric of leadership development as observed within this learning space.

Again, it could be argued that the case for *empathy* and *carrying others* might indeed suggest a softer view or perhaps more feminine side to perceptions of leadership (and again, leadership development). This is because the above directly contrasts with the portrayal of leadership as one of rugged masculinity or strong male character, a tendency that is often reflected in North American leadership literature (Jones, 2005). It is thought that a leadership development approach which promotes the respectful acknowledgement of others’ weaknesses might serve to discourage the tendency of some to gain competitive edge over others by

seeking to exploit these weaknesses. Again, this is in contrast to the contemporary Anglo-American view of leadership development as a strategy for gaining competitive advantage and even to earlier conceptualisations of leader as *Yankee Hero* and *Savage Conqueror* (Prasad, 1997).

Lastly, the articulated preferences for leadership that is *approachable*, that is *not dictatorial* and that *listens* is noticeably in contrast with earlier views of African culture as having a high Power Distance. What is rather implied in this case is that ‘good leadership’ is far more consultative than it is autocratic and contrary to some earlier views, that a more democratic leader is likely to be better effective in this context than an authoritarian one. As such, a leadership development focus that emphasises team-work, open communication, and commitment to dialogue might be more suited in this regard.

6.2.3 Social Constructions of Leadership Development – YouthOrg

In this case, I have argued that if indeed environment and context are among the powerful forces that shape our understanding and knowledge about any given social phenomenon, then this organizational approach to Leadership Development was one that bordered noticeably on the ethnocentric. In the analysis of findings from this case, some of the evidences include;

1. The seeming obsession with what was referred to as ‘latest’ and ‘cutting edge’ theory, and which I proceeded to term its *theory-fetish* (see case study 1);
2. The noticeable absence of contextual references to Africa or other cultural contexts within the formal learning content, as well as in the class discussions;

3. Organisational practices that ‘othered’ and marginalised members from the Africa region specifically, such as;
 - i. The absence of a learning and development centre in the Africa region in nearly one hundred years of its existence as an international organisation
 - ii. The clear absence of a representative from this region on the ‘global’ resource team
 - iii. An intellectually ethnocentric approach that was clearly unacknowledging of African contextual knowledge, but rather sought to impose predefined ‘acceptable standards’ on participants from this region in a way that was not only prescriptive, but fundamentally ‘silenced’ their views, foreclosed the possibility of contextual learning and consequently, may have interfered with the evolvement of any conceptual knowledge frameworks that are critical to meaningful leadership development in this instance (Jackson, 2004).
4. Silence, withdrawal, and the seeming inability to participate actively in classroom discussions on the part of the delegates from the Africa region.

In preceding sections, I have argued that the way and manner we ‘know’ about a thing is significantly influenced by our mental programs, cultural values and belief systems (Hofstede, 1980), and is shaped by our thought processes, interactions and lived contextual experiences, all of which subsequently form the frames of

reference (Goffman, 1986) for developing our understanding of that thing. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that our contextual frames of reference are especially critical to the way in which we approach learning, manage meaning and make sense of a thing. I believe that this is why effective leadership development must strive to capture ‘teachable moments’ or frames of reference that resonate with participants’ contextual experiences (Kelly et al, 2006). Hamilton and Bean (2005) write that frames are indeed value-laden rhetorical resources that afford a gestalt through which we view ongoing circumstances. If this is the case, then the absence of contextual references on this particular leadership development intervention fundamentally called its effectiveness into question. This is because a lack of contextual references basically implied a lack of frames to refer to, and a lack of frames of reference would in turn undermine understanding because this meant that participants lacked such a critical viewing gestalt and as such, could not effectively ‘make sense’ of the programme content, seeing that there was little or no contextual ‘link’ to their own socio-cultural reality. Indeed, it appears that this may have been largely responsible for the silence and withdrawal that was observed in this case; for if contextual references were truly lacking, then one may ask ‘with what rhetorical resources and through *what* frames did the intending users contextually apprehend or ground the LDP in question?’ As earlier noted, knowledge about leadership (or leadership development) is a process of reality construction that is grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982). However in this case, it is not clear how the participants in question were expected to ‘manage meaning’, since the absence of contextual references may have occasioned a lack of contextual frames or links, with which to ‘make sense’ of the ongoing intervention.

As such, because this learning intervention did not account for the socially constructed nature of knowledge about leadership (Grint 1997, 2000), I believe that it substantially undermined sense-making and meaning management, mainly because to the participants in question, it lacked the value-based rhetorical resources with which to do so. This finding underscores Ladkin et al's (2009) notion that leadership development should make sense to the intending user, and could potentially achieve this by incorporating a degree of contextual recognizability or teachable scenarios that link with participant experience. Nevertheless, in this case, it seems that the lack of contextual acknowledgement, the marginalisation of the Africa region, and the seeming 'othering' of its 'knowledges' – as evidenced by its visible non-representation on the LDP Resource Team – may have collectively sabotaged any possible inclusion of 'teachable moments' from within the context of African society.

Again, it appears that the above situation not only accentuated what is from all indications so far a contextual dissonance, but that this may have further occasioned a 'disconnect' between the participants on the one hand and the programme content on the other; a situation which symptomatically manifested itself in silence and withdrawal. As has been argued, recognisability and contextual resonance are key elements critical to the effectiveness of leadership development (Kelly et al, 2006); but it is again necessary to recall that *recognition*, typically assumes an earlier *cognition* or is contingent on a previous *knowing*, which as has been argued, is only possible in context or through the umbrella of a worldview (Haarmann, 2007). For the participants in question, if we

consider that there was little or no contextual allusion to their own region, it thus follows that there would have been very little to *re-cognise* on the LDP content. Indeed, we can safely assume that that ‘passage’ from *cognition* to *re-cognition* could not have been possible, because in the very first place, there was little or nothing that was *familiar* or that was ‘known earlier’. Therefore, the lack of contextual references would mean that there was little or nothing that would have been *re-cognisable* to the intending users of the ongoing LDP.

The lack of recognisability or absence of contextual resonance in this case, would logically imply dissonance or difference between the contextual experiential knowledge that participants brought to the programme on the one hand (elements of which could have been recognised, had they been incorporated), and the context-devoid and now unrecognisable content they had encountered on the programme, and to which they now responded with silence. I argue that the resultant effects of such contextual dissonance are what may have further occasioned this reaction. Gill (2006) has observed that ‘leadership means different things to different people’ (p.7) and as such, should be studied in the context of how it is perceived by those involved in leading and in being led. Alvesson et al (2010) have also noted that learning environments are rhetorical spaces within which identities are negotiated and (re)constructed, and that within these learning spaces, there are ‘shifting and competing identities’ that vie for prominence. In light of this, I believe that one might attribute the observed reactions (of silence and withdrawal) to possible tensions arising from shifting and competing identities between that embodied in participants’ contextual knowledge about leadership, contrived within their own socio-cultural reality (Haarmann, 2007),

and that exemplified by the equally contextual worldviews from Europe and America (devoid of African references) that had been advanced in the programme content. Furthermore, Grint (1997, 2007) has affirmed that all accounts of leadership are derived from linguistic re-constructions of experience, all of which are not necessarily equal, but some of which may have secured dominance because they are the products of more 'powerful' voices. Again, it is quite possible that the observed silence and withdrawal was merely a fallout of a theoretical/intellectual dominance within the LDP – from resource team to classroom, in which 'cutting edge' leadership theories from Europe and America commanded key organisational focus, and any knowledges from Africa were (un)consciously 'othered' (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994) and cast in the periphery.

In light of findings, if we consider that participant constructions of leadership/leadership development seemed more oriented towards the collective, then it could be argued that the contrary (i.e. an individual/self-orientation) is dissonant. As earlier noted in both studies, a significant part of the learning material was drawn from Anglo-American literature, which has maintained a traditional focus on the development of the self and on the building of individual capacity in order to achieve organisational ends (Blunt and Jones, 1997; Prasad, 1997; Jones, 2002). In the first case, the YLDP was evolved to facilitate organisational change and for its proponents, one way of achieving this was through a recourse to western management literature – as evidenced by the observed *theory-fetish*; with a key emphasis on the individual or as stated, on 'bringing out the lion in you'.

Not only does this mirror a fundamental *individualist* underpinning in the pedagogy of contemporary leadership development but again, it reflects a tendency to separate the individual as a unit from the organisation as an entity, in order to ‘develop’ leadership capacity therein. While this is not in itself an issue, of particular concern is the apparent neglect of the other end of the deal i.e. the failure to consider the big relational picture of the organisation as a whole, of which the individual is part and parcel and to which they are inextricably linked for the purpose of leadership/leadership development. It is this failure of contemporary leadership education to acknowledge the inextricability of part from whole, of unit from entity; that is itself problematic. It is believed that this is an important consideration that calls for deeper analytical engagement with the idea of a more collectivist notion in the practice of leadership development.

Again, the same can be said for leadership development engagement on the second case study. As it appeared, contemporary leadership education in this was fundamentally premised on the development of the individual; a situation that noticeably contrasts with some of the themes that emerged from the analysis of participant lived contextual experience; which implicitly reflect a more collective orientation. While this can in no way be generalising of African society, these participants are indeed a relevant population from within that society and in a sense, their experiences afford some insight into the socio-cultural reality of that given context.

In addition to a preoccupation with individualism, both studies were notably underpinned by a lack of critical pedagogy in the course of learning and teaching. For the first, it was a silence and withdrawal on the part of the African participants

who seemed reluctant to engage with the class discussions. In the case of the Nigerian MBA students who were far more vocal, in addition to a lack of criticality within the theoretical content (particularly with the theories of self and subjectivity, which seemed unduly prescriptive, telling and tended to be more normative) there was equally a lack of critical engagement with the texts themselves. I argue that the tendency to proffer management solutions, rather than critique or challenge established patterns of thought is often typical of contemporary management education. It is felt that this prescriptive ideological framework as opposed to a more critical pedagogy is what may have fostered isomorphism in graduate business schools (Adizes, 2007) and enabled uniformity in the global training of the managerial corps (Fougère and Moulettes, 2011) such that an MBA graduate from either Africa or North America will know broadly the same things about business and management (Blunt and Jones, 1997).

6.3 A Postcolonial Analysis of Leadership Development

It is possible that contemporary approaches to leadership development not only remain ethnocentric, but more importantly, continue to seem ‘correctional’ in nature. In both cases under study, it appeared that the approach to leadership development assumed a noticeably prescriptive dimension. This is because the constant preoccupation with mainstream ideology (as embodied in the published theoretical material and the case study examples) and the observed theory-fetish, coupled with the apparent lack of contextual references, all point to a strong preference for Anglo-American perspectives. However, the key issue is *why* this was the case, particularly as this preference did not necessarily stem from a complete absence of African contextual references. That is, even if we say that

there was/is a dearth of theoretically articulated material on the subject of leadership/leadership development in Africa, this in no way implies the complete absence of local contextual practices or indigenous reference points. One wonders why these were not at all included in the engagement with leadership development in both cases, particularly in the Nigerian study. Indeed, I believe that in this case, the clear preference for the former largely occasioned a marginalisation of the latter; a situation that may have arisen from an earlier systemic appropriation of the indigenous by the prescriptive mandate of western formal education in Nigeria (See Metz, 1991). In her analysis on *the usurpation of space*, Höpfl (2000) writes that the cancellation of a thing in favour of its substitution by another, intrinsically assumes a regulatory dynamic, and presupposes the authority to define. That is, the substitution of the old or *original* by the new or *alternative*, carries with it a fundamental regulatory dynamic and an assumed power to define that casts the former in the light of inappropriate, inadequate, and therefore as unsuitable. In the case of leadership development, I argue that the preference and recourse to mainstream literature may have served to cast the indigenous in the light of inadequacy, and as unsuitable; so that western leadership development – derived from mainstream leadership ideology – has overtime come to appropriate local leadership wisdoms. Nevertheless, this process is not without its own dynamics.

It is thought that the appropriation of the indigenous by the foreign or western may have been progressively enabled by a dynamic of inferiorization, one that finds its roots embedded in the postcolonial construct of *othering* (Spivak, 1990; Bhabha, 1994). Indeed, it is my submission that these voices may have been inferiorized and de-emphasized by the more powerful voices of a long enduring

knowledge hegemony that was only being visibly re-enacted in both case studies of leadership development. Höpfl (2000) further notes that the offer of *a better alternative* casts the *original* in a light of *deficiency* and *inferiority*, by having already assumed the power to define that which is *acceptable*, by advancing that preferred alternative. The process of inferiorization is thus contingent on the power of a regulatory dynamic that portrays the indigenous or original as *deficient* and *inferior*, by querying the integrity of its appropriateness. It is my position that contemporary leadership development practice rooted essentially in western functionalist paradigms (e.g. ‘transformational’ leadership), is continually presented as that preferred alternative, to the detriment of local contextual frameworks that might exist.

Furthermore, I argue that such substitution and appropriation of knowledge, has gradually served to *de-value* an already de-emphasized local, and overtime, subsequently cast this in the light of ubiquitous or ordinary. This is because the usurpation of space is not without its consequences; since the cancellation and appropriation of a thing simultaneously connotes a loss of value (Höpfl 2000) and obscures the essence or meaning that was originally intended. Therefore I believe that the sustained and uncritical adoption of mainstream leadership development in non-western contexts, particularly in Nigeria, has significantly undermined any real and sustainable theoretical interest in local and more contextualized frameworks of leadership knowledge.

In view of the postcolonial argument, I suggest that these voices have been systematically ‘othered’, and at the moment, remain theoretically dislocated from

the mainstream. However, this study shows that these voices are not necessarily absent. Indeed, while some of them may have remained silent – a sharp cutting silence that was clearly visible among the African participants enrolled on the first case study – others are the increasingly faint ‘local’ that continue to speak, even if only from the margins of the ‘global’, as observed in the Nigerian case. In his analysis, Grint (1997) suggests that all ‘knowledges’ are not necessarily equal, but that some may have secured linguistic and cognitive dominance because they are the products of ‘more powerful voices’. Therefore, we can translate this to mean that although ‘all voices of leadership are powerful, some voices are more powerful than *others*’; and such vocal dominance is what may have given positional premise to ‘popular’ notions of leader or leadership. In my case studies, vocal displacement is made possible because the voices that could have contributed to the design of leadership development have been over time ‘othered’ as inferior, de-emphasized and systematically substituted by ‘louder’ and more powerful voices. In the Nigerian case, it appears that the theoretical dislocation of local voices was preceded by their having first been made ordinary, through powerful prescriptive voices of colonial education that had sought to ‘correct’, to ‘civilize’ and ‘regulate’ the behaviour of the indigenous peoples. As it appears, these ‘powerful voices’ still continue to sound from the west, in the form of prescriptive functionalist paradigms, ‘cutting-edge theories’, foreign case studies and ‘management skills sets’; regularly dispensed via human resource learning initiatives such as LDPs, and various other institutionalized forms of management development such as the MBA. Therefore, it seems that long after the abolition of the empire, the colonizing patterns of thought formerly instituted by political and economic control are perpetuated in the form of an intellectual and ideological

marginalization of the 'other', systematically achieved through contemporary management learning and 'global' leadership development initiatives.

It can be argued that this is not a uniquely 'Nigerian' situation; as Blunt and Jones (1997) have aptly stated that '... any self-respecting MBA holder, say from Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Ecuador or anywhere else, will know broadly the same things about leadership and other aspects of human resource management' (p.10). What makes this case noteworthy is the curious interplay of other social and economic factors inherent in it. It is my argument that in the Nigerian case, the displacement of local voices is traceable to the socio-economic link between western formal education and elitism in colonial Nigeria. That is, the crucial connection is borne out of the deliberate and systematic creation of a western-educated elite in colonial Nigeria (Metz, 1991), and continues to shape leadership development and management learning there today. Here was an internationally recognized and top rated management school with very strong ties to the west, courted by local and international corporate elites. Participants enrolled on this prestigious programme would be considered privileged to be there and could look forward to a high flying career upon graduation. As such, we might predict that the mainstream knowledge advanced on the programme was not very likely to be received critically. Therefore, in addition to the political suppression of indigenous 'voices' through the colonial framework of formal education, an enduring socio-economic romance between western education and elitism may bear responsibility for the sustained de-emphasis, devaluing and ordinarization of local voices through the perpetuation of western functionalist education, a variant of which was enacted on the LDPs studied.

6.4 Leadership Development - Towards a Postcolonial Approach

Judging from both case studies, if we consider that leadership development was mostly dominated by mainstream views, it might be interesting to consider what a postcolonial approach to developing leadership in non-western contexts might look like. In the following sections, I advance three possible ways through which this can be approached; *indigenising*, *mainstreaming*, and *internationalising*. I proceed to explore these in the next few paragraphs. Below is a diagram that attempts to illustrate what I believe is the status quo, and subsequent diagrams within the next few sections attempt to further illustrate what the various options might look like.

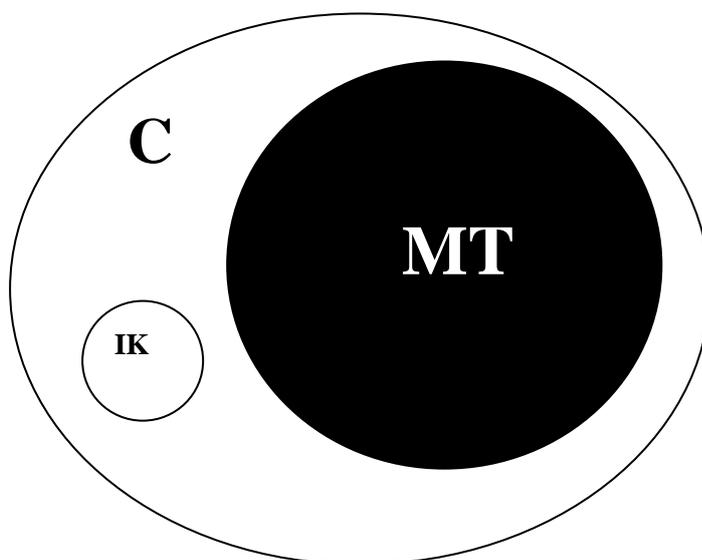


Fig 6.1 – Leadership Development in a non-western context

In the above illustration, the larger circle represents what may be understood as the non-western context; in this case, the context of an African society. The small circle (IK) represents articulated indigenous knowledge, wherever this may be

found. The larger circle (MT) is representative of the mainstream body of knowledge, which as has previously been argued, is contrived outside of the depicted context and contextually dissonant within the context in question; this is symbolised by its different colour. The colour contrast herein represents its dissonance and also, its paradigmatic dominance as mainstream. From this diagram, we see that the body of articulated contextual knowledge, though contrived and located within its context, is significantly smaller than the size of the mainstream body of knowledge, which appears to dominate the depicted local context. What this diagram attempts to portray is the fact that indigenous knowledge though present within this context, is still relatively under-articulated and largely relegated towards the margins, in favour of the mainstream. This picture, I believe represents the status quo. The following section explores the first option of fully indigenising leadership development, and also presents a diagrammatic representation of what this might look like.

6.4.1 Indigenizing Leadership Development – A Solution?

In light of calls for more contextualized approaches, some African scholars have already argued for a more indigenized model of leadership education (Obiakor, 2004; Mbigi and Maree, 2005). Ranging from the subtle to what some might consider extreme, these researchers contend that western theories of leadership have not done the African continent much good, and as such should be abandoned in favour of more culturally centred models of leadership. In particular, Obiakor (2004) observes that African leadership is ‘still tied to European-centred frameworks’ and has been ‘counter-productive to the sacred existence of the African peoples’ (p. 402). He contends that African leadership has ‘struggled’

because it lacks the required theoretical foundations required to build strong and stable societies; and he attributes this to the absence of African-centred education in leadership development. For him the ‘institutionalization of a pragmatic system of African-centred education that opens concrete rooms for African experiments and African experiences and fosters the use of the African body, mind and soul’ (Obiakor 2004; p.404) is a pre-requisite that is urgently needed to solve Africa’s leadership problems. Fig 6.2 attempts a depiction of this option. In this, we see that the previously smaller circle IK is now presented as occupying the knowledge core or mainstream in this context. In this illustration, the centralisation of IK has come at a cost of ‘abandoning’ MT or the mainstream (Obiakor, 2004). Nevertheless, as will be argued in the next few paragraphs, this seeming intellectual ideal is also not without its drawbacks.

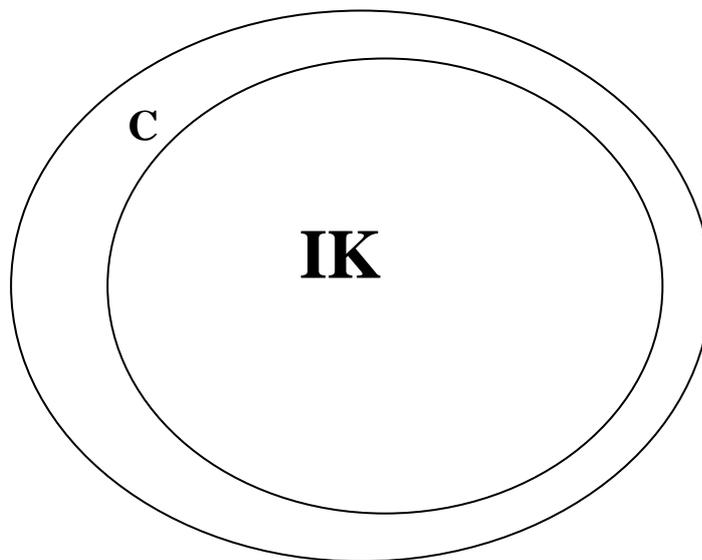


Fig 6.2 Indigenising Leadership Development

While the idea of creating an active learning space for such indigenous experimentation is indeed necessary, I observe that within this argument lies the allusion to an ‘African’ experience, mind and soul; this is an assumption that bears

the risk of idealism. In my consideration of this, I find that although there is, to an appreciable degree, shared cultural symbolism across much of Black Africa (see Diop, 1978; see also following section on *ubuntu*), African social and cultural reality is not homogeneous. For want of more detailed evidence within management and organization studies, I draw on Hofstede's (1980) seminal study here. While Hofstede studied the rest of the world on a country level, Africa was initially framed on a region-continental level in which it was sub-categorized into West, East, South and Arab Africa; this is a situation which in itself pre-supposes the homogeneity of culture across the countries that make up these African regions. However, despite the sweeping generalization and the geographical broadness of this study, as well as its overtly broad compartmentalization of culture, the research showed that culture across Africa was not homogeneous at the time. If this is the case and if, truly, people are grounded in different realities, I am curious as to what an 'African experience' or an 'African mind' would look like. Be that as it may, this does not preclude the fact that there are indeed certain aspects of socio-cultural reality and experience that transcend many African societies, including elements of shared symbolism (Diop, 1978), and an example of this can very easily be found in the traditional African philosophy of *ubuntu*. However, I caution that the allusion to a culturally homogenised African society in its entirety might indeed appear rather simplistic.

As such, if Africa is not socio-culturally homogeneous, then there are shadows over the feasibility of an 'African-centred' model of leadership development. While I do not entirely reject the usefulness and importance of indigenous knowledge, values and beliefs in leadership education, I maintain that the

suggestion of an ‘African-centred’ model of leadership development begs further clarification, and just as with western/mainstream notions, should also not be adopted uncritically. For instance, what uniquely qualifies an experience as being ‘African’, and how might this in turn inform an ‘African mind’? Again, what implications would this have for an ‘African Leadership model’? Indeed, in discussing the limits of western leadership theories in Africa, Blunt & Jones (1997) clearly acknowledge that it is unrealistic to suppose that *much* of what can be said about leadership will apply equally across the vast continent of Africa. Nevertheless, they suggest that despite the existing cultural heterogeneity, similarities do exist from which a ‘tentative’ profile may be drawn.

Another concern with the call for entirely culturally centred models of leadership development is that which already seems to plague mainstream theories, and that is the danger of perceived ethnocentrism. If indeed Africa appears increasingly isolated from a rapidly globalizing and technologically advanced world, does not the perception of ethnocentrism fuelled by ideological isolation present the danger of aggravating the status quo ante? I hold that if the intellectual imperialism allegedly propagated by European-centred frameworks of learning is a major contributor to Africa’s leadership crisis, then a focus on *entirely* ethnocentric knowledge frameworks cannot now be advanced as a cure-all for its hydra-headed leadership problems.

Furthermore, with regard to the question of leadership research and theorizing, it has become increasingly obvious to scholars that there is a dearth of literature on leadership research touching the sphere of the African Continent. Some have

recounted their search experiences in this regard as they made to access the relevant literature in the course of their work (Jackson, 2002; Malunga, 2006; Nkomo, 2008). While Jackson (2002) notes that there is ‘a real absence’ of *articulated* work and *theory* on leadership research in Africa, he also observed that wherever such articulated accounts exist, they appear to be rooted in discussions around the developed-developing world dichotomy. It is felt that such a situation would undermine constructive criticism and consequently would hinder the emergence of necessary conceptual frameworks crucial to sustainable development (Bolden and Kirk; 2005). Again, Blunt and Jones (1996) not only note an ‘absence of local alternatives’ (p. 13) but equally observe that in the micro domains of management, there still may be more interest in the replication of western management theory and practice in non-western contexts, than there is resistance to it. Malunga (2006) further acknowledges the challenge of a lack of articulated scholarly work and particularly recounts that it was not easy to find the relevant literature for his study on the subject of leadership in Africa. All of the above underscore the point that research on leadership/leadership development in Africa is not always readily available. However, the near absence of articulated theoretical frameworks does not necessarily mean that local and contextual references are entirely unavailable. Rather, I believe that this knowledge dearth can be seen as a *theoretical* one, rather than the lack of *practical* instances from which experiential, referential and comparative forms of learning may be drawn. In addition to other reasons cited above, it is possible that this situation may have been further aggravated by the ancient African practice of orally bequeathing tradition – that is, indigenous customs and cultural ways of being – from one generation to the next via the verbal medium of *storytelling*.

One possible approach to tackling this dilemma would be to concentrate on conducting more leadership/leadership development research (as is the case with this study) and theoretically articulating the subject in order to address the current dearth of published literature. Indeed, in considering possible approaches to addressing the current situation, it might help to examine what theoretically articulated instances of leadership may already exist within the body of knowledge and again, the philosophy of ubuntu comes to mind.

6.4.1.1 Ubuntu – an alternative?

Africans have this thing called UBUNTU. It is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being able to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours.

– Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town (Battle, 1997)

Perhaps the first and the most clearly documented notion of indigenous African leadership, the concept of *ubuntu* was originally adapted from the *Shona* expression *umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye* meaning ‘a person is a person, through others’. *Ubuntu*, which is the Ndebele word for *hunhu* (Shona), is a concept that attempts to convey the humaneness of the human being. Also expressed in Zulu as *izandla ziyagezana*, i.e. ‘the left hand washes the right hand and the opposite is true’ (Chinouya; 2007), *ubuntu* is a metaphor which embodies the significance of group solidarity on survival issues, particularly in the context of deprived and

dispossessed communities in Africa, where resources for livelihood are scarce and communities must depend on each other collectively in order to stay alive. It is thus a concept of sisterhood/brotherhood and collective unity for survival (Mbigi and Maree; 2005). The cardinal ideology of *Ubuntu* is mirrored in the philosophy that *a person is only a person, through others*, and this perspective finds practical expression in the lived values of *relationships, reconciliation, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity* (Tutu, 1997; Malunga, 2005; Mbigi and Maree; 2005)

It has been argued that ‘unless development structures, strategies and processes can harness these *ubuntu* values into a dynamic transformative force for reconstruction and development, failure will be almost certain’ (Mbigi and Maree; 2005; p. 6). As such, there have been calls to hark back to what might seem to be a pre-modern heritage, where many aspects of life and community were ritualised and held sacred, and in which they were generally perceived to be essential and crucial to the sustenance and survival of entire communities, to create a sense of belonging and in-group inclusiveness. Indeed, some proponents of *ubuntu* have suggested aligning contemporary organizational life with African cultural experience. For instance, Malunga (2005) suggests the ritualisation of many of today’s organizational practices is a practical representation of the *ubuntu* ideology in today’s organizations. To enable individuals to develop a sense of belonging and inclusiveness arising out of shared practices, Mbigi and Maree (2005) advocate harnessing the traditional religious experience and sacred constitution of the African peoples. It is believed that such applications of *ubuntu* may assist in facilitating dynamic social transformative change in the

reconstruction of African society. In short, the concept of engaging *ubuntu* within the context of work and organizations emphasizes the need to draw on traditional African collective solidarity, community networks/relationships and social sensitivity in evolving new approaches to management learning and leadership development.

However, while the calls to harness the social benefits of group solidarity and increased social responsibility are commendable, the notion of *ubuntu* as it is presently advanced, rests on a number of assumptions that appear simplistic. In this section, I have chosen to discuss two of which I consider to be the most prominent; namely, the twin notions of the *non-dynamism of culture* and *social stability* (Iwowo, 2010). As it is presently framed, *ubuntu* assumes the non-dynamism of culture and society. However, research suggests that this is not the case. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that although some distinct cultural values of a society may endure, culture is continually constructed, negotiated and changing over time, with cultural diffusion and overlaps often occurring (Steward, 1955; Schein, 1968, 1985; Smircich, 1983; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Such cultural diffusion is clearly mirrored in many African societies today; increasingly, there is vast cultural proliferation occurring virtually across what could previously have been referred to as fixed cultural boundaries. Examples of these abound in elements of the Anglo-American pop culture that are constantly propagated in and through the very powerful instruments of technology and mass media (Gillespie, 1995). It is no secret that the vivid images presented have been known to appeal mainly to younger generations. These visions are constantly being re-enacted and, over time, have continued to find practical expression in the

course of daily societal and cultural life through the vibrant agents of fashion, Hollywood, cable satellite, the Internet, and so on.

Secondly, the ideology of *ubuntu* appears premised on the existence of relatively *socially stable* societies and while these may have existed at some point in African history, it is certainly not the case today. The argument here is that while the idea of absolute collectivism may have worked in many traditional African societies, the diffusion of a western capitalist and consumerist culture appears to have informed new forms of socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political interaction in present-day Africa. It should also be noted, however, that consumerist culture is infused in the African context with a number of ancient but latent indigenous traditions, such as, the socio-economic indicators of achievement and materialism among the Igbo of Nigeria (*see* Wambu, 2007). To further illustrate this point, I draw on the experience of a fellow African scholar during one of his visits to his native village in the Igbo speaking part of Eastern Nigeria. In this, the author recounts aspects of his interaction with some young men from the village who are having to respond to the urban encroachment of *Aba*, a fast-growing trade city, located just on the outskirts of their native village. Below is an excerpt from his account.

‘Interestingly, as I wandered round the village, the young men, *Nwa Afo* (sons of the soil) I spoke to, seemed to welcome the advent of *Aba*. I thought I could detect a yearning. Perhaps *Aba* meant a space where they could make a living, earn fast money, buy their own property and escape the age-based hierarchical structure that was in our village? Power was generational in the village and many of these young men would not see power or make law for perhaps 30 years. They were frustrated that these older men who had it were not responsive to their needs. Land was commonly held, but once the old men had given you your portion to farm, you were

expected to add value to it. Many of the young were no longer interested in farming, they had lots of other business ideas that they wanted capital and support for. One entrepreneurial cousin was already producing handbags and sandals in Aba and needed capital to scale up his operations. Help for him was being co-ordinated at the family levels, but resources were limited. There was no broader vision on how the village could itself support any of these activities, or plug into the other industrial activities happening in the dynamic centre of Aba. So, once given the common land, for which they were supposed to be merely custodians, many of the young people were illegally selling it to generate liquid funds.’

(Wambu, 2007; p.118)

From this account, the pressure which a rapidly diffusing capitalist and industrialist culture considerably exerts on a relatively more collectivist society becomes apparent. The indigenous concepts of *village leadership*, *social responsibility* and *communally owned resources* upon which the notion of *ubuntu* inherently rests, has failed to respond to the changing needs and aspirations of the younger working population. In this case, one of the immediate fall-outs is the commoditization and sale of what is otherwise, communally owned land.

Against this background, it appears that this culture-mix of western capitalism and consumerism on the one hand, and indigenous materialism on the other, have collectively propelled a seemingly alien wave of economic competition and individualism; a dynamic that is proving lethal to the notions of community solidarity, material collectivism and the social sensitivity which the calls for *ubuntu* involve. Furthermore, the current economic instability in many African nations also appears to have added a more dangerous dimension of ‘survival of the fittest’ to the scenario painted above. Herein lies the dilemma of *ubuntu*: a tension

between the need for collective survival in the face of *poverty* and *deprivation* - even as the people draw on collective resources - and an equally human desire to be seen to excel, to be recognised, respected and celebrated as that individual achiever who has risen above the challenge of the same socio-economic odds of *poverty* and *deprivation*.

My argument is that while the need for socio-economic stability may have fostered collectivism and group solidarity in many traditional African settings, the advent of modern capitalism and consumerism, possibly aided by an indigenous materialist ideology, seems to have occasioned a new wave of individualism and competitiveness. Although such individualism and competition may have been previously alien to many African cultures, they presently seem to be propelled by the presupposed drivers of *ubuntu* – poverty and deprivation. That is, the material conditions that gave rise to the concept of *ubuntu* in the first place, (i.e. poverty and survival in the face of deprivation) are identical to those which now appear to drive the quest for self actualization. This is clearly seen in the Wambu extract above; the desire of the young men to ‘escape’ the economic, hierarchical and communal structures that underpin the *ubuntu* ideology stems from their exasperation with it. Indeed, it has been acknowledged that although *ubuntu* values were traditionally practiced in ancient stable and predictable societies, part of the limitations of such an extremely ‘Africanised model’ is that it may have failed to transcend the stable predictable societies of old (Malunga; 2005).

Ironically, it is possible that given the advent of western capitalism and a growing materialist and consumer culture, these two factors themselves – poverty and

deprivation – may have provided a perfect stage upon which individualism, competition and a ‘survival of the fittest’ ideology are constantly enacted. This is so because arguably, the propensity for the recognition and celebration of the economically privileged few, as well as the emergence of an elite class in the midst of a deprived community, remains ostensibly higher than would be the case in more economically stable societies. Unfortunately, this scenario is closer to the reality of most African societies today.

Although the idea of group solidarity and collectivism seems intuitively appealing, I submit that the possibility of recourse to the practice of absolute collectivism as advanced by *ubuntu* appears, at worst, impracticable and at best, naively utopian. Furthermore, the romanticization of *ubuntu*, particularly with its emphasis on *conformity* and *reconciliation* may embrace the practice of group consensus or group-think at the expense of constructive criticism. Such a situation would not only be counter-productive but may be detrimental to development of the robust conceptual frameworks that are required for any meaningful advancement of organization and society at large. Indeed, consistently taking collective responsibility for the organization may actually suffocate personal motivation and inhibit healthy competition among peers (Sinclair, 1992; Malunga, 2006).

A further concern with the idea of absolute recourse to *ubuntu* is that its proponents may have overlooked the presence of a mutant form of governance in Africa – that of ‘despotism’, which was often the fall-out of an errant monarch chief.

Traditional African society was often structured across tribal lines with cultural affiliations mainly rooted in the tribe and clan (Diop, 1978; Adichie, 2007; Malunga, 2006). For instance, people were usually identified on the basis of the tribe they belonged to and it was common practice to gently mark all new born children of the tribe with a tribal mark that would serve to distinguish them from members of other tribes throughout the course of their lives. This was particularly important to help identify people in times of adversity such as tribal warfare or if a person wandered far from the clan and got lost. Tribes were usually governed by a king or Monarch Chief and depending on their size and cohesion; they possessed a clear hierarchy of political institutions with the king at the head of the polity (Dunsing, 2000; Chiwanga). Often assisted by an aristocratic elite or council of chiefs, the Monarch Chief was the highest traditional ruler in the land and the custodian of indigenous power. He was seen as the 'ancestral choice' and as the link between the community and its ancestors (Malunga, 2006) It is said that the government of the Chief drew its legitimacy from the link with the community's ancestral spirits and again, from the collective will of the people (Mazrui, 1967). He possessed a strong centralised authority, was vested with enormous executive, judicial and military power and in him rested final decision-making powers, and in some cases, absolute authority (Olivier, 1969).

Fundamentally, certain ideological principles of ubuntu indeed appear to have underpinned the government of the monarch chief, one of which is consensus. Olivier (1969) notes that although the chief, in the exercise of his various functions, theoretically had the right to ignore the advice of the advisory council; he did not usually do so in practise, but followed the consensus of their opinion. Should he act contrary to their counsel, he did so at the risk of serious

consequences which could range from falling out of favour with his tribe to more serious circumstances of losing his chieftainship.

It is further noted that apart from their social status, the Chief's authority was based on kinship ties within the community and again, ethnic consensus i.e. an agreement by the vast majority of the people as regards the suitability of the individual to lead; legitimised by the chief's dependence on the people's goodwill. This is reflected in the Tswana proverb *kgosi ke kgosi ka batho* meaning 'a chief is a chief through his people' (Dunsing, 2000; p.74), It is said that a breach of this could result in a removal from office by voting or in worse cases, assassination

However, the absolute authority of the monarch chief could sometimes lead to despotism (e.g. Shaka Zulu of the Amazulu kingdom); a situation that clearly contrasted with community values. Given that the legitimacy of the king's rule was anchored significantly in the collective will, such despotism overtime rendered the Chief's government illegitimate and repressive (Dunsing, 2000; William, 2002). Again, this situation was far from the ideal and errant chiefs were often dealt with.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that Contemporary African political culture has sometimes, tended to mirror a monarchical tendency that is repressive and in some extreme cases, despotic (Mazrui, 1970), e.g. former President Idi Amin of Uganda. It appears that the shadows of this mutant strain seemingly alien to the fundamental principles of African leadership is one that proponents of an African renaissance who call for absolute recourse to *Ubuntu* ideals, may have to contend with and again given the assumptions it makes of social stability and non-dynamism of culture, I argue that the practicality of a full recourse is problematic at best and in a worse-case scenario, impossible.

Now, if one considers this argument particularly in respect of how leadership development may be indigenised, and again, given the number of Graduate Business and Management Schools on the continent – from the prestigious Lagos Business School of the Pan-African University in Nigeria to the Graduate Business School at UNISA in South Africa - the crucial question of *what must now be taught in the interim* remains unanswered. As both case studies show, what is currently taught is still predominantly drawn from mainstream business/management knowledge, and if indeed Africa is to develop more local theoretical frameworks on leadership/leadership development, then it follows that sufficient attention must be paid to bridging the gap in knowledge, a process which can only be expected to occur gradually and over a period of time. In view of this, it appears that there might be only a few other options left in the short term, which include the option of continuing to teach western management theory in African Business Schools.

6.4.2 Maintain the status quo– Perpetuate Mainstream/Western ideology?

In considering the question of *what must be taught in the interim*, that is, if we are to fully centralise indigenous forms of leadership knowledge, maintaining the status quo does seem to be a much more readily applicable option. Again, if we consider the present dearth of indigenous theory, and the fact that further generation of such knowledge frameworks can only occur over an extended period of time, then it might indeed be much more practicable to ‘stay as we are’. As Blunt and Jones (1997) have already stated, it seems that there is more preoccupation with the perpetuation of mainstream ideology than there is indeed

resistance to it. As it appears, findings from both case studies mostly confirm this. What this means – i.e. maintaining the status quo – is that we must continue to teach western theories of leadership and management in our schools; that is, we must simply continue to propagate and perpetuate mainstream knowledge in Africa, regardless of how contextually dissonant these might appear. While this will no doubt solve the question of *what must now be taught?* it must again be emphasised that this too, is not without its consequences, amongst which: the continuous marginalisation of indigenous knowledge frameworks, an increased appropriation of space, and the further silencing of local voices by the vocal power of the mainstream (Grint, 1997, 2000). In this instance however, it must be accepted that western paradigms of management and leadership will continue to occupy centre stage to the detriment of any existing indigenous knowledge frameworks, such as *ubuntu*. The danger herein is that in the course of time, this paradigmatic dominance will continue to de-emphasize and marginalise indigenous knowledge and will over time appropriate whatever space the former has previously occupied, while keeping it continually in the periphery.

Again, a more pertinent danger of such a situation is that it will not necessarily remain static, but due to human agency occasioned via learning and development and other such HR interventions, mainstream MT will continue to grow and expand within this context until finally, it pushes IK out of the picture. As Höpfl has already argued, this appropriation of space would most certainly not occur without a loss of value. I believe that not only will this situation bring about a loss of originality, that is, a severe loss of contextual knowledge through the passage of time, but that it would also gradually occasion a loss of identity. Indeed, as

Alvesson et al have argued, that learning enclosures are more or less rhetorical spaces in which the (re)construction and negotiation of identity occurs, and that within such spaces, there are usually ‘shifting and competing identities’. If we consider this alongside Grint’s notion of ‘stronger and more powerful voices’, it is my personal conviction that within the learning space, the powerful rhetoric occasioned by the stronger voices are most likely to dominate in the processes of identity (re)construction. I also believe that this over time, will pose a real danger to the construction of cultural identity within this learning context. An even more pertinent danger that could possibly arise from this is the *complete* loss of indigenous forms of knowledge, as the more space is appropriated, the more value is lost.

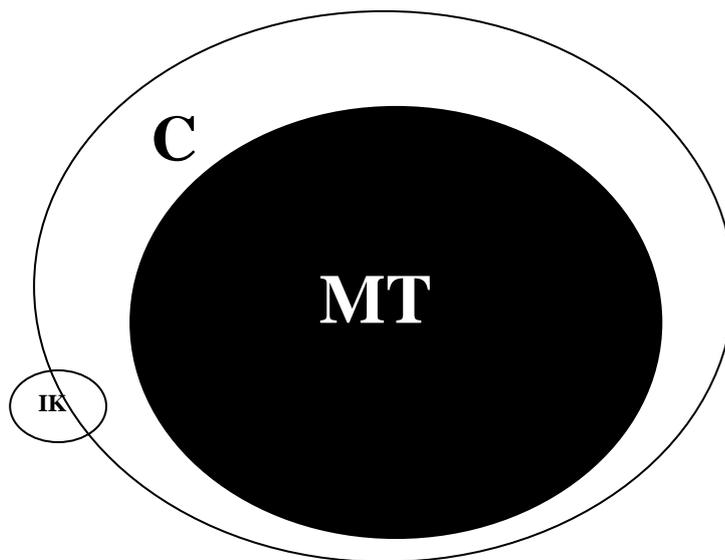


Fig 6.3 – Maintaining the Status Quo

Be that as it may, I observe that even though maintaining the status quo appears one that may be considered, it is necessary to explore other relevant options that can be worked with in the short term. This means that if the overall aim is to ground management and leadership development in Africa within more contextual

frameworks, then immediate practical strategies are needed, that would not necessarily compromise local or indigenous identities, as medium- and long-term research is being conducted to bridge the existing knowledge gap on the subject. I believe that this is especially pertinent, given the current reality of business globalisation and what seems like Africa's increased isolation from the global scheme of things.

6.4.3 *The Internationalization of Leadership Development*

Against this background, it is clear that the advancement of an 'Afro-centric model' of leadership development or worse still, an uncritical adaptation of *ubuntu* as a cure-all for Africa's leadership crisis, is not a readily practicable option. I propose what may be considered a more practical and readily applicable solution, which I term the *internationalization of leadership development*. This suggestion is premised on the concept of hybridization. In this, I propose a leadership development model in which current mainstream theories are examined and understood in the light of the prevailing environment and subsequently contextualized via creative adaptation within a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994). I am suggesting that global leadership development interventions be held to account for the local contextual frameworks in which they are deployed. In this vein, Mbigi and Maree (2005) have suggested aligning the social experiences and innovation of the African peoples with successful management techniques from the East and West; they argue that this would serve to 'attain comparative parity' with the rest of the world, while *ubuntu* and the concept of indigenous collective solidarity could remain the central focus of practice. Beyond that, I advance the option of internationalization wherein existing leadership theories – as they are presently

taught in contemporary business schools – are critically and reflexively merged with everyday scenario-based learning. This advocates in a sense, the creation of an experimental third space (Bhabha, 1994) in which such theories are creatively appropriated, in order to develop more contextually relevant knowledge frameworks. Pursuing this approach, existing leadership theory would be examined, comparatively understood, and critically adapted in the context of the intended user's everyday work experience. I argue that this is a missing component from the design of contemporary leadership development interventions; not only contextualizing 'knowledges' but more specifically, addressing the practical question of '*how I can apply it here and now*'. As Ladkin et al (2009) have noted, leadership as it is taught and learnt, must make contextual 'sense' to the intending user, I believe that this is one way to achieve that aim

Therefore, I propose that rather than merely employing indigenous knowledge as the entire basis for Leadership Development interventions, particular attention could, for instance, be paid to developing and articulating *operational stories* from the daily work, social and interactional life of modern organizations within the African continent. I believe that this would not only provide the basis for proper contextualization and, as such, internationalization of leadership development, but would also allow a space for creative adaptation and practicable application of current theory and practice. This is because a core preoccupation of the proposed approach would be to critically examine, understand and creatively appropriate existing leadership knowledge within the social, ideological and practical frameworks of the current contextual reality. I contend that such an approach is far more practical because it would help respectfully to accommodate and

experientially navigate the contextual complexities of the African organizational terrain in relation to the rest of the world, and not merely reflect traditional indigenous knowledge.

6.4.3.1 Storytelling – Worldly Leadership Development

To this end, I propose the development of clearly articulated contextual case studies which would not only serve operationally to ground knowledge and make experiential learning possible, but would also quickly begin to address the current dearth in leadership and management literature on the African continent. Interestingly, this approach is quite easily premised on a most effective, time-tested and proven instrument of cultural preservation in Africa – the ancient traditional art of *storytelling*. Taylor and Ladkin (2009) have noted the usefulness of engaging art-based methods in the process of managerial development and they suggest that art-based forms of learning could be introduced in the context of organizational development to add novelty and promote engagement. They add that such methods enable what they term an ‘illustration of essence’ (p. 56), in which forms of art e.g. *storytelling* are employed to illuminate the essence of a particular situation. They write that ‘arts-based methods can enable participants to apprehend the “essence” of a concept, situation, or tacit knowledge in a particular way, revealing depths and connections that more propositional and linear developmental orientations cannot’ (p. 56), further noting that such forms of art help to present a nuanced picture of reality in which the particular essence of a given set of circumstances or situation is conveyed. Furthermore, Taylor et al. (2002) argue that the notion of storytelling within the organisation may be viewed as a useful vehicle in the social construction of meaning and they write that

‘organizational storytelling is a useful place to bring an aesthetic perspective to organizational research, management practice and organizational learning’ (p. 313). They further observe that the beauty of storytelling is that the picture of reality which stories (re)present often by-passes our rational logical processes of reasoning and instead speaks cognitively to the *emotions* of our mind, thereby encouraging what may be referred to as *felt meaning*. Again Gabriel and Connell (2010) acknowledge story-telling as a useful pedagogical practice for knowledge sharing and sense making and that ‘when told well, in the right context and at the right time, stories economically communicate experience, ideas and emotions and help make sense of potentially perplexing situations’ (p.508). I believe that for the purpose of leadership development in non-western societies such as Africa and Nigeria in particular, this is a helpful and practical approach to adopt.

The practice of storytelling is not new; indeed it is indigenous to Africa as it is around the world. However it retains a particular power in many African societies. Most people born in Africa can still easily recall childhood memories of *tales by moonlight* and the powerful images that these imprinted on the young mind. As such, I firmly believe that the pedagogical treasures within this one tool can be especially effectively harnessed in African contexts with a view to enhancing leadership development and learning. Practically speaking, this means that deliberate action must now be taken to actively observe and record flexible adaptations of existing leadership theory, even as particular attention is paid to experiential *knowing*, emphasizing creative experimentation, and centralizing scenario-based learning. For instance, a practical approach to this may seek to ground existing leadership theory within learning frameworks of localized

experience. One way to achieve this would be to design learning programmes that specifically allow for the critical examination of current leadership literature through the lens of ‘lived’ contextual experiences. That is, understanding, appropriating and even de-constructing existing leadership *theory*, in the light of *stories*, which themselves have been articulated and presented in the form of contextual experiential case studies. I believe that this would not only help merge mainstream theory with contextual practice, but it would also allow a space for constructive learning in the short term, as well as contributing to the development of conceptual frameworks for theoretical advancement (Jackson, 2004).

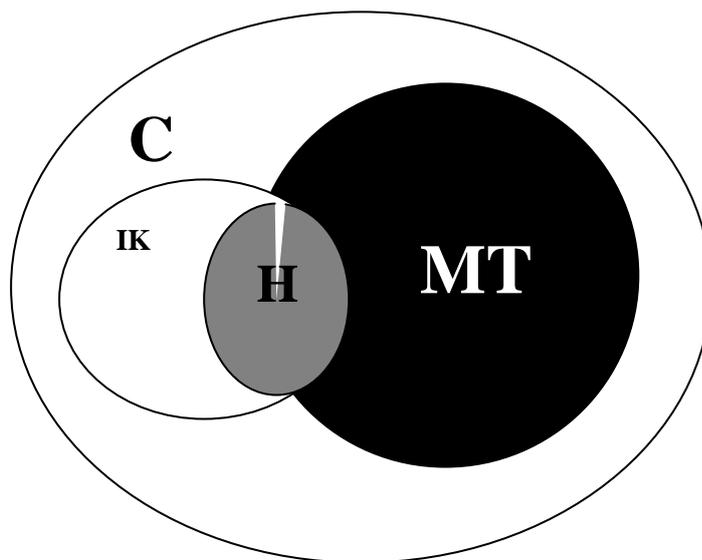


Fig 6.4 – Internationalizing Leadership Development

In the figure, we see that the more mainstream theories are critically adapted and grounded within the local, and hybridisation (‘H’) occurs. The area H is over time expected to feed into the indigenous body of knowledge because the more H is appropriated, the more contextually defined and locally ‘owned’ it becomes, until over time, H grows to become ‘the norm’, that is, part and parcel of indigenous

practical knowledge IK – i.e. local forms of knowing, of doing and of being (see Hofstede, 1980; House et al, 2004). Nevertheless, it is relevant to point out that H is also depicted as ‘a grey area’. In my depiction, this represents the fact that H is never fully or purely blended within the local context, but is again that third space which is continually subject to local (re)negotiation or appropriation, and which Bhabha may describe as ‘an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment’ (1994; p.6) moving towards its adaptation as contextually tested, proven and grounded knowledge (and as part of IK).

It may be encouraging to note that a strand of such hybridization has already begun to find expression in practice. For instance, the Graduate Business School at the University of Cape Town, South Africa has had to redesign its Graduate Business programme in the post-apartheid era. In this instance, traditional MBA teaching approaches have been re-evaluated in order to become more relevant to programme participants who must operate the management principles they learn in the context of the present era. As April and April (2007) write, ‘the GSB decided to pioneer a new model of a business school in Africa, one that was both international in orientation and suited to countries where there are simultaneous imperatives of socio-political transformation, international competitiveness, and economic development’ (p. 216). It is hoped that such interventions may not only find practical expression in the design of future leadership development initiatives, but may also begin to promote a whole new understanding, not to mention a very conscious practice, of worldly leadership development.

In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I reiterate the core aims and objectives of this study and summarise the main research findings. I note the empirical and praxis contributions that this thesis makes to the field of knowledge, as well as the implications for theory and practice. I equally highlight the limitations to the study, and finally, lay the basis for a future research agenda.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview

This thesis has studied the dynamics and challenges of engaging with leadership development practice in the context of programme participants from non-western societies. It began with the observation that in view of globalisation, international organizations were increasingly afforded more inter-connectedness between their various member organizations and that rapid information flows mostly powered by the speed of electronic media (e.g. the internet) had been instrumental to knowledge proliferation on a global scale; which had further opened up the world for the purposes of increased knowledge access and transfer. It further observed that as international organisations sought to improve and standardise their internal processes, it appeared that management learning interventions, and in particular leadership development programmes were being designed to reflect this trend (Adizes, 2007). Conceptualised against the backdrop of various criticisms that have trailed the globalisation of management education, particularly those that have centred on the socially constructed nature of knowledge, the issue of intellectual imperialism and ethnocentrism, as well as universality and contextuality in the process of knowledge creation; this study has transcended disciplinary boundaries to draw on ideas and insights that critically examine the use of mainstream leadership development as a management learning intervention in a rapidly globalising world. It does this with a view to throwing new light on the contemporary practice of such knowledge interventions outside of the context

within which they are thought to have been developed. To re-cap, this research was theoretically conceptualised in light of debates anchored in;

- the socially constructed nature of knowledge and in this case, the theoretical elusiveness of the concept of leadership,
- The politics of knowledge creation – particularly intellectual ethnocentrism and knowledge imperialism allegedly rooted in the processes of knowledge creation
- The practice of leadership development in context, particularly in terms of contextual relevance to the intending user.

Overall, the main objectives of this research were three-fold. First, to conduct an in-depth investigation into the contemporary practice of leadership development in the context of participants from non-western societies and to explore the learning experiences and understandings which participants construct for themselves while on the programme/s. Second, it aimed to contribute to existing knowledge of leadership development in general, but more specifically, to deepen the understanding of leadership development in context and generate insight into the use of this as a management learning tool in the context of a non-western society such as Nigeria

Lastly, the research aimed to contribute towards addressing the issue of dearth of articulated knowledge on leadership development in Africa.

The study was purely qualitative and conducted through a case study approach. Empirical data was collected through the research methods of interviewing and

observation. Interview results were further subjected to phenomenological analysis and field observation data was thematically analysed.

This investigation has spanned two case studies. The first is the case of YouthOrg, an international non-profit organisation. This case assumed a more exploratory dimension that afforded the opportunity to examine this intervention as an organisational catalyst for change, and that helped generate a new proposition for further inquiry into the question of *contextual dissonance* in the practice of leadership development in the context of a non-western society, this time, Nigeria.

The second case study is that of the Lagos Business School (LBS), a reputable Nigerian institution, renowned for its management learning and teaching excellence and listed on the Financial Times Global Executive MBA rankings. In this case, I have explored in greater detail, participant engagement with leadership development as a management development tool on the MBA – including the learning experiences of programme participants and their social constructions of leadership development. I have equally explored the salient issue of contextual dissonance in the practice of mainstream leadership development within this non-western socio-cultural reality that these participants inhabit and within which they must apply the knowledge that they have gained from such interventions.

7.2 Summary of Main Findings

Given that environment and context are among the powerful forces that shape our understanding and knowledge about any given social phenomenon (Goffman, 1986), it follows that one of the most important findings that has emerged from

this particular study is that *contemporary practice of Leadership Development still appeared to mostly border on the ethnocentric*. Indeed, from both cases, we see evidences of this in the noticeable lack and in some instances, total absence of contextual references to Africa within the theoretical materials and in other formal programme content such as the case study examples used in teaching; as well as the seeming obsession with what was referred to as ‘latest’ and ‘cutting edge’ theory, or as I have termed it, the *theory-fetish* that portrayed a seemingly insatiable appetite for western leadership theory, to the apparent exclusion of ‘other’ non-western forms of knowledge. This finding confirms the assertion that leadership/leadership development in Africa still remains tied to western management theory (see Blunt and Jones, Obiakor, 2004, Mbigi, 2005).

I argue that this is especially relevant to note because it goes way beyond the literary scope of scholarly arguments and theoretical debates to a much more concrete enactment in practice. That is, beyond scholarly criticisms in the literature, this study presents notable empirical evidence that confirms the intellectual ethnocentrism of contemporary leadership development in Africa, and more specifically, within the context of Nigerian society. Furthermore, this finding is again pertinent to note as it carries continuing implications for leadership capacity building within this context; this is because should it persist, the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge frameworks is unlikely to discontinue; a situation that may further aggravate contextual dissonance. For instance, if we say that leadership development should make sense to the participant, the uncritical adoption of case studies with limited experiential resonance and restricted contextual application would merely perpetuate this disconnect and could potentially render such interventions ineffective. I believe it

is needful for leadership development in Africa to mirror a considerable awareness of this.

Secondly, should the above persist, there might be potential risk of paradigmatic conflict, possibly arising from shifting and competing identities between the images of leadership that uncritically transposed mainstream theories present and those that have been constructed in and through the lived contextual experiences of indigenous participants (such as those we see from the case of LBS). While it is not exactly clear what the outcome of this might be, it is felt that the ‘silence and withdrawal’ of the African participants on the YLDP may begin to afford a glimpse into possible scenarios.

Furthermore, in the case of YouthOrg, there emerged organisational practices that ‘othered’ and marginalised members from the Africa region specifically, such as; the absence of a learning and development centre in the Africa region in nearly one hundred years of its existence as an international organisation; the clear absence of a representative from this region on the ‘global’ resource team; not to mention an intellectually ethnocentric approach that was clearly unacknowledging of African contextual knowledge, but rather sought to impose predefined ‘acceptable standards’ on participants from this region in a way that was not only prescriptive, but fundamentally ‘silenced’ their views. Lastly, in this case, there was the display of silence and withdrawal in the case of the African participants, as well as the observed inability to engage fully in class discussions.

I believe these findings are relevant to note because they carry important implications for the way leadership is developed in the context of global non-profit organisations and particularly, for YouthOrg’s long-term plan to evolve its

programme as an international benchmark for future leadership development interventions in the above sector. In my view, it emphasises the need for international organisations such as these, in seeking to develop leadership capacity across the various national or cultural contexts that they span, to maintain sensitivity around these issues and guard against the reproduction of uneven binary relationships in their knowledge agenda.

Again, I believe these findings are important because they reveal deep-seated cultural persuasions within this organisation that a century of existence may have failed to erase. Although this is not necessarily generalizable, I argue that it is possibly symptomatic of a knowledge ethnocentrism that may be far more implicit in the learning traditions of such ‘global’ organisations than is often immediately visible or readily acknowledged; particularly if we consider this in light of organisational isomorphism (Prasad, 1997). Nevertheless, this remains open to further investigation.

In the second case, I explored the instance of leadership development in Corporate Nigeria in the case study of the Lagos Business School and traced the evolution of colonial education in Nigeria up till the present day. Findings from this case study demonstrated that leadership development had mostly been interpreted in light of its *benefit* to the broader community, and in terms of the capacity to *help* others. While this is not in the least an allusion to generalizability, *it appears to indicate a possible contextual dissonance* between western functionalist paradigms of leadership (Blunt and Jones, 1997) that seem ‘obsessed’ with the science of self (Jones, 2006) on the one hand; and the interpretations, perceptions and expectations of leadership that participants brought to this case, on the other. In

this, it is observed that so far, the latter have appeared far more consistent with the philosophy of *ubuntu* than with any of the individualist functionalist notions encountered in the course of the research. Indeed, it was discovered that there was a *strong community orientation* observed therein and in which leadership development was socially constructed as *building the community through the person* or *building self for others*; with fundamental values seemingly centred on leadership development as *learning for the greater good, to make personal sacrifice, for carrying others along, to promote empathy and moral accountability, to harness the value of maturity and finally to bear collective responsibility*.

In this, rather than merely seeking to standardise organisational processes, and way beyond its conceptualisation as a means to an end, leadership development appeared fundamentally understood as social empowerment of the community for equitable co-existence. That is, beyond the building of social capital or relationships, it was seen as the conscious considerate empowerment of the collective, through the person, i.e. *developing me so I can go back and develop others, because I care* or with a view to *carrying others along*. In this, the construction of leadership development appeared to carry an obligatory dynamic that seemed remarkably consistent with the ‘collective survival in hardship’ orientation of *ubuntu*. This is because it carried with it a certain expectation of the individual to positively enhance the lives of others, as a direct consequence of having participated on a leadership development programme.

As such, rather than *identifying the strong* or *a survival of the fittest*, social constructions of leadership development appeared to focus more on *covering the*

weakest. That is, empathetically strengthening any weak links in order to ensure a functional unified whole, with an underlying consciousness that ‘I am, *because* we are’.

Be that as it may, while the above findings in no way imply the existence of a perfect society, it follows that they are indeed an exposition of the implicit leadership paradigms and expectations that lie beneath the practice and engagement with leadership development that has been studied within the observed learning space.

7.3 Contribution of the Research

Leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon and indeed researching and theorising this concept has remained challenging to scholars over the years.

First, this research makes an important empirical contribution to the discourse of leadership development in the context of non-western societies through the presentation of specific data that reveal new and interesting insights into the practice of leadership development in Nigeria and more broadly, Africa.

Through the empirical contribution it makes, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that because ‘there are as many definitions of leadership as those who have attempted to define it’ (Stodgill, 1970, p.) and given that there is no one universal truth about leadership (Billsberry, 2009) since it really is a process of reality construction that is grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), meaning different things to different people (Gill, 2006; p.7); then it follows that the practical ‘development’ of such a theoretically elusive construct

as *leadership* cannot and should not be consciously oriented towards a universalist or globalising tendency.

Secondly, this thesis makes a praxis contribution to the field of leadership development by advancing a number of practical ways in which contemporary leadership development practice may be approached from a postcolonial perspective, in non western societies such as Africa. In this, it proposes and develops a practice model that is not only acknowledging of local knowledge frameworks but also one through which contemporary management learning interventions (e.g. leadership development) may be held to account for the lived contextual reality of the indigenous communities in which they are applied.

Furthermore, it advances the option of internationalisation as a practical consideration and an alternative way of re-thinking and re-conceptualising the practice of leadership development in the context of a non western society such as Nigeria.

Lastly, I believe that in rather a significant way, this work has also made its own little but important contribution towards addressing the issue of knowledge dearth on leadership development practice in Africa, by documenting the various dynamics, processes and challenges associated with the learning interventions it has understudied, and in so doing, has equally contributed to broadening the existing discourse on the subject matter.

7.4 Limitations to the Study

Despite the fact that this thesis offers new and practical insights into the contemporary practice of leadership development in Nigeria, and more broadly,

Africa, it is tempered by various significant limitations. Prominent amongst these is the realisation that given the number of case studies carried out, the research audience is way too small and the scope of the thesis is far too narrow for its results to be generalizable. Therefore, this means that the research can in no way establish that the findings from it are representative or typical of all instances of leadership development practice in Africa.

Furthermore, due to the fact that there was a slightly more restricted access to data collection through interviews in the first case study than there was in the second case, (which although seemed to compensate for the former situation), it is felt that there could have been uncovered deeper insights into the experiences and social constructions of the programme participants who had been enrolled on the first case study, that is, leadership development in the case of YouthOrg. This is because less restricted access would have enabled me conduct more participant interviews over a much longer period within this organisation than I had presently been able to.

7.5 Implications of the Study

7.5.1 For Theory – Academics & Researchers

In the course of an extensive literary exploration, it emerged that very few studies had attempted to explore the subject of leadership development in Africa; to my knowledge and as at the time of commencing the study, there had been none so far on Corporate Nigeria. This research adds to a theoretical understanding of leadership development in context by identifying an epistemic gap through the critical review of literature, in the theory and practice of leadership development in Africa, and in particular, Nigeria. While this gap may possibly be narrowed

through various means of scholarly judgement, this research makes effort to bridge the epistemic gap by using empirical studies to highlight fundamental logics that underpin the practice of leadership development in the afore-mentioned context.

Furthermore the research brings a new perspective to the study and theorising of leadership development in Corporate Nigeria. It is however proffered that this does not in any way constitute an affront on mainstream thinking, but rather has argued for the acknowledgement of a plurality of ‘knowledges in the conceptualisation of leadership development theory and practice in Africa.

7.5.2 For Practice – Educators & Practitioners

From the findings of this thesis which has mainly explored and unravelled social constructions of leadership development, a major praxis implication is that rather than continue to assume a universalist orientation – a situation which is more likely to emphasize dissonance, contemporary leadership development interventions should not only recognise but should move to align with knowledge elements of the contextual.

Again, because ‘there are as many definitions of *leadership* as those who have attempted to define it’ (Stodgill, 1970, p.) and given that there is no universal truth about leadership (Billsberry, 2009) especially since it is a process of reality construction which is inextricably grounded in the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), meaning different things to different people (Gill, 2006; p.7), those whose business it is to practically facilitate the ‘development’ of this social construct in others must first of all realise that due to its socially constructed foundation, the practice of leadership development cannot and should

not attempt to assume a universalist or globalizing tendency, but must be held to account for the local frameworks within which it is deployed. Simply put, leadership development engagement in practice must proactively and fundamentally embrace leadership development in context (Bolden and Kirk, 2005).

7.6 A Future Research Agenda

This research has attempted to study leadership development on two levels – a broad inquiry into the lived experiences of African participants enrolled on a leadership development programme within an international organisation, and more specifically, it has made to observe this intervention in the context of Corporate Nigeria, as represented by programme participants at the Lagos Business School. While this is useful in itself, I believe that there is a lot of room for further investigation into this area. For instance, it is felt that subsequent research could take a far more structured approach to studying leadership development interventions in the context of the African Continent, either through national studies that focus on examining this concept at a country level in other African countries e.g. Ghana, South Africa, etc.; or perhaps more research could be done into the contemporary practice of leadership development on a sub-regional basis. Whatever the approach, I believe that this research merely scratches the surface and at its very best, provides only a tiny glimpse into the subject matter, and that further research is certainly needed in order to deepen the understanding of leadership development in the context of contemporary African society.

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