

# **INTEGRAL UBUNTU LEADERSHIP (*Utungamiriri Huzere*): Africa's unique contribution to a world on fire**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The world is in crisis, with transcultural, transformational, transdisciplinary and transpersonal imbalances which call for innovative solutions to addressing them at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Dissolving the imbalances requires a social, dynamic and an integrated approach. This is what motivated the author to collaborate with other co-researchers to embark on a non-conventional integral research journey with a burning desire to make a huge difference in peoples' lives at the individual, organisational and societal levels. The desire was fuelled by what the co-researchers saw as lack of Integral leadership at the business and political levels in Africa. That said, this paper seeks to popularise the Trans4M integral research and innovation methodologies and the Integral four worlds concept to address leadership and governance crises that are often at the heart of corporate failures and company closures.*

**Keywords:** Integral research and innovation, call, context, co-creation, contribution, catalysation, activation

*“We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationships. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa-giving the world a more human face” (Biko, 2004:51).*

### **1.1 Introduction: The world is on fire**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century world in which we live is plagued by considerable transcultural, transformational, transdisciplinary and transpersonal imbalances at individual, societal and organizational levels. These imbalances exist locally and globally between the rich and the poor, black and white people, male and female, young and old and between rural and urban dwellers. The restoration of the balance between city and rural life is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing humanity throughout the world. There seems to be no answer to unemployment evils and

the mass migration of people into cities until such time the standard of rural life is uplifted. The direction being taken throughout the world is destructive to nature, to people, at both the local and the global levels and may lead to worldwide environmental and social collapse, unless desirable solutions are found to reverse the trend.

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), two German authors, called this situation, an age of disruption, coming from three divides, the ecological, socio-economic and the spiritual or inner divides, altogether creating results that nobody wants. The disruption emanates from a disconnection between the self and nature, the self and others and even between self and self. The current system has, according to the two authors, eight systemic disconnects or bubbles due to the intellectual bankruptcy of mainstream economic thought. To put it bluntly, there is massive institutional and leadership failure, and this is why the world is on fire. I am concerned about the burning issue of leadership failure (*Utungamiriri hunokundikana*) at the political and business levels. The lack of Integral leadership (*Utungamiriri huzere*) lies at the heart of political and business leadership problems not only for Africa but for the whole world. This gives me the impetus and motivation to seek novel innovative and transformative solutions to the leadership problems.

Where do these local and global *lacks* and imbalances take us to? For Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), what is needed today is the kind of leadership that will move from ego-system to eco-system awareness. Scharmer (2009), in his theory U, posits that this entails the leadership having open minds, with the capacity to suspend old habits of thought and open hearts with the capacity to empathize as well as seeing situations through the eyes of others. In addition, there is need for leadership with open wills which is the capacity to let go of the old and allow the new to come.

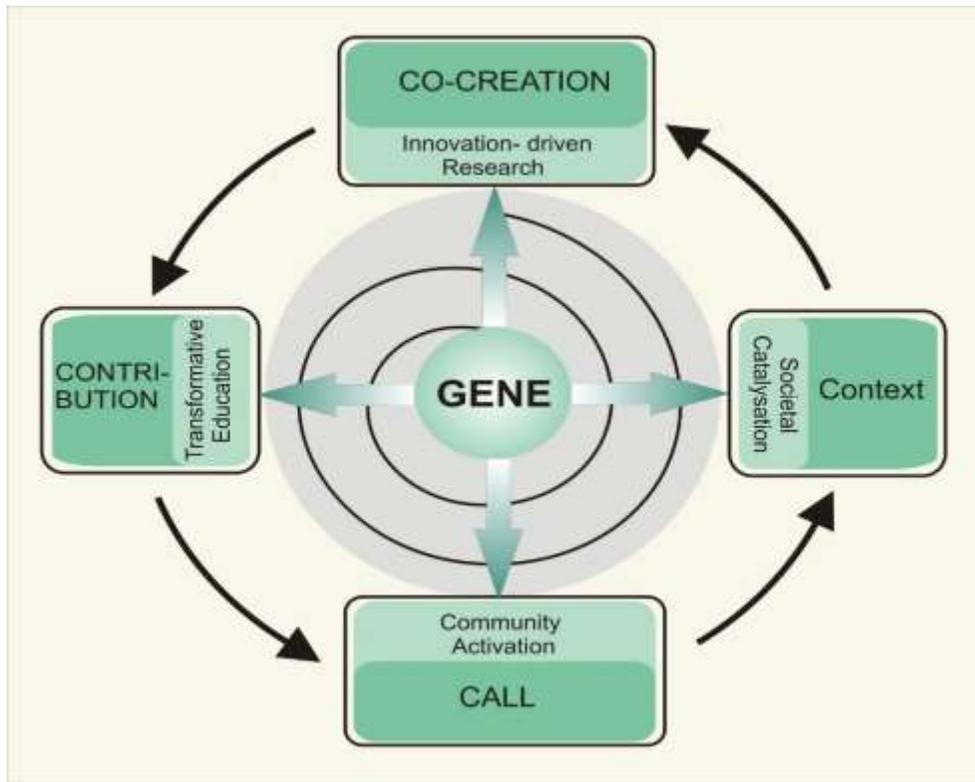
For Biko (2004), the father of the Black Consciousness Movement, what is needed in order to address some of our present day challenges is an inward-looking consciousness raising process. As Senge (1990), rightly puts it, through our actions, we all contribute to these problems, even though the normal tendency is for people to say the problems are created by someone “out there”. This view is often taken because while we learn best from experience, we rarely experience the consequences of most of our decisions. The core learning for many people, according to Senge, is that today’s problems come from what were yesterday’s solutions.

In that light, this paper seeks to address the burning issue of leadership failure with a view to making a contribution towards the renewal of individuals, organisations and society, I embarked on Lessem and Schieffer’s (2010) integral research journey. This is a research paradigm whereby social research leads to innovation. Whereas in the majority of cases Western and Northern approaches to research dominate the world while Southern and Eastern ones are left out, with integral research, a fourfold approach encompassing the Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern paths was followed.

## **My Research Journey**

My integral research was made possible through a Trans4m PhD programme. In pursuing my doctoral research (Matupire, 2014), the research journey followed Lessem and Schieffer’s (2013), 4Cs and CARE rhythms. The first acronym (4Cs) stands for the Call, Context, and Co-

Creation, through which, together with co-researchers, a Contribution was made to knowledge. The second acronym (CARE) stands for Community activation, Awakening consciousness, Research and Education. The two alternating rhythms of 4Cs and CARE are shown in *Figure 1* and they jointly work together, co-engaging in a spiral and cyclical movement as they build on each other along the way from Call to Contribution.



*Figure 1:* The 4Cs and CARE rhythms

The *Call* part in integral research is what energises the researcher, that burning desire to be fulfilled in his life, while the *Context* entails the researcher delving into an understanding of the transcultural, transpersonal, transdisciplinary and transformational world imbalances with a view to alleviating them. *Co-creation*, the third C of the 4C rhythm, involves the interweaving of integral research (the process), integral leadership, culture enterprise and economics (the content) following the *GENE* rhythm, the acronym that stands for *grounding, emerging, navigating* and *effecting* (Lessem and Schieffer, 2009), which in *Figure 1* is at the centre. With *Contribution*, researchers distil and share their integral development with their community and society with a view to transforming local and global education (Lessem and Schieffer, 2013).

What then comes out of the integral research efforts, in the spirit of co-sensing and co-creation and guided by the *Ubuntu-Unhu-Botho* philosophy, is an African Integral Leadership Model (*Utungamiriri huzere*). The model produced together with co-researchers and co-subjects is the contribution towards leading from the emerging future. As the research project evolved and as part of operationalizing and testing the Integral leadership model, the *Pundutso* co-operative inquiry group (CI), was formed, initially by three co-researchers, Mamukwa, Chinyuku and Matupire. This creation of the CI group was part of the research process which saw it developing into a significant catalytic role at the individual, organisational and societal levels in terms of the

process of learning and development. Researchers visualized the evolving catalytic role for *Pundutso* eventually growing into a heightened level of post-doctoral contribution in Zimbabwe, which is what has actually happened up to this very day with *Pundutso's* involvement in the development of a Research Academy within the context of a Communiversities.

We now begin the integral research journey with the *Call* stage.

## **1.2 The CALL: The Inner call ( burning desire) and outer call (burning issue)**

The first C of the 4Cs rhythm in this transformation journey, is the *Call*, from which in terms of the CARE rhythm, *Community activation* builds on. My emergent inner call or burning desire for action, coming out of my humble life story (Matupire, 2014), was to renew organisations which were underperforming for a variety of reasons. This prompted me to work with one particular company in Zimbabwe as the research community together with my co-researchers, although in the process of doing so, the desire extended to working with the Zimbabwean industry in general. In terms of the outer call or burning issue, this desire stemmed from my witnessing of many companies in Zimbabwe going through difficult situations, over a long period, in an effort to remain operational in a world of imbalances. The issue of organisations failing to perform due to among many other factors (leadership failure), had become, for me, a burning issue that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### **1.2.1 Operationalizing the Call**

While leadership failure and or company failure is the burning issue that I addressed, it was recognised that the phenomenon should not just be looked at in terms of its success or failure which are just two opposite poles. This dualistic perspective may not take us out of the leadership crisis. No wonder, Albert Einstein is well known for his famous quotation that “*No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.*”

In synch with Einstein, my research on this transformation journey therefore transcended this duality and moved into a new level of consciousness, one in which they viewed the world systemically. I took into cognisance the fact that organisations are really complex social systems. As such, I have advanced that the twenty-first century managerial leader should use systems thinking as an approach to problem solving. This is critical because the success of a managerial leader is determined by his ability to solve problems or exploit opportunities effectively and well (Tracy, 2010), as well as his ability to holistically focus on relationships as opposed to just the components or parts.

Thus, with my systems approach, focus was on the entire environment with an underlying principle that the “*whole is greater than the sum of the parts*”.

We now look at the areas of imbalance and disintegration in the *Context* that causes leadership failure.

### **1.3 The CONTEXT: Uncovering areas of imbalances and disintegration**

The second C of the 4Cs rhythm is Context which involves uncovering areas of imbalances and disintegration at the individual, organisational and societal levels. The world imbalances are uncovered with a view to finding ways to alleviate them. When viewed from the alternating CARE rhythm, Catalysation or Awakening of consciousness, the second element builds on Context.

#### **1.3.1 The leadership context of the research community**

During the course of my research, it was recognised and respected that the research community was a public company which should not divulge information that is not known by all shareholders.

The outcome of the context analysis was that, the 21<sup>st</sup> century world is in crisis, with transcultural, transformational, transdisciplinary and transpersonal imbalances at the individual organisational and societal levels. The situation calls for managerial leaders who are committed to correcting the imbalances by starting at the local level and then proceed to the global level. The tendency by many is to do the opposite that is starting to work at the global level and then go to the local level.

For African researchers, Asante (2003) would say that Africans should look at issues from a black man's perspective, what he calls an Afrocentric approach to changing our situations. Anyanwu (2012) put it in another way when he said that to be an African involves more than geographical origin and skin colour but it constitutes a particular way of "*being-in-the-world*".

With this, we come to the third C of the 4Cs rhythm which is Co-creation whereby we witness the interweaving of integral research (the process), integral leadership, culture, enterprise and economics (the content) following the *GENE* rhythm, the acronym that we said before stands for *grounding, emerging, navigating* and *effecting*. The alternating CARE rhythm for Co-Creation is research. We begin by exploring knowledge origins through research method. As such, this is really a section of transforming reality with a description of *grounding*.

### **1.4 CO-CREATION: Transformation of reality**

#### **1.4.1 Knowledge exploration through Research Method**

The research community selected for the work based doctoral research challenge (Matupire, 2014), was, ART Holdings Limited, a public listed manufacturing company in Zimbabwe. The organisation was analysed in terms of its culture, type of products produced, its shareholders, management, and systems and in terms of performance evaluation in as far as the information was accessible to the public. In describing the company as such, integral research in essence had already begun and this was the unfolding of an exciting journey which commenced when my life story was narrated, thereby ascertaining the *Call*. This company exposure was really a case of transforming reality with a description of *grounding*, following the *GENE* rhythm, the acronym that we said before stands for *grounding, emerging, navigating* and *effecting*. The research path chosen had a dual analytical-transformative trajectory as shown in *Figure 2*.



Figure 2: The double layered Integral Research Trajectory. Source: Lessem and Schieffer, 2010).

This is a double layered trajectory with, on the one hand, the analytical trajectory which starts with *Research method*, *Research methodology*, *Research critique* and ends with *Action research*. On the other hand, there is the transformative trajectory which starts with *Origination*, *Foundation*, *Emancipation* and builds up to *Social Transformation* (the OFET concept).

The Southern relational path is strong on *Grounding*, the Eastern renewal path on *Emergence*, the Northern path of reason emphasizes *Navigation* and the Western path of realization is strong on *Effecting*.

At the path level, the research followed a double-layered trajectory which is comprised of firstly, the analytical orientation towards research as well as secondly, the transformative orientation towards innovation.

#### 1.4.1.1 The double layered integral research trajectory

This research journey was interactive between the analytical and the transformative trajectories as researchers moved towards social innovation:

The research team continued the integral research journey at the public company, being grounded along the Southern relational path and following the path GENE from origination at the first level to Transformation at the fourth level within the context of the double-layered research to innovation trajectory. The following are highlights of *grounding* at the research community.

#### 1.4.1.2 The integral research method: Descriptive method and transformative origination

The public company was analysed in detail because with descriptive methods, one has to immerse himself or herself in a particular life world describing phenomena that reveal the burning issues which were being researched into.

In the transformational project at this company, I closely examined various Western and African perspectives of the leadership concept, which Maxwell (2008), defined simply as *influence*: nothing more, nothing less. Leadership and its applications was analysed from the various perspectives with a view to bringing in new concepts such as the *Utungamiriri huzere* or integral *Ubuntu* leadership that were then considered to be more relevant to the African context. Although there is insufficient documentation on African leadership perspectives, researchers were conscious of the dominant themes on the African continent, such as transformation and change in assessing leadership performance in the corporates and for the renewal of industry.

From *grounding the* research effort moved to the research methodology, the *Emergence* part along the path level GENE.

#### **1.4.2 Knowledge Foundation revisited through Research Methodology: *Emergence***

In section 1.4.1 of this Co-Creation, a description was made of *Grounding* of interweaving integral research (the process), integral leadership, culture, enterprise and economics (the content) following the **GENE** rhythm, the acronym that stands for *grounding, emerging, navigating* and *effecting*.

The section began with a description of the research method. We now continue phenomenologically from where we left by revisiting integral leadership, culture, enterprise and economics through research methodology. This section describes the *emergence* part or the second level in the Southern, relational path that the researchers followed, within the context of the double-layered research to innovation trajectory.

##### **1.4.2.1 Phenomenological Methodology: Foundation**

Phenomenology, the study of phenomena or our experiences is now an additional discipline of philosophy, the other four core disciplines being ontology (the study of beings), epistemology (the study of knowledge), ethics (the study of right or wrong, good or bad) and logic (the study of valid reasoning).

In describing phenomenology as a philosophy, the central question that is usually asked is on the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon for a person or group of people (van Manen, 1990). In understanding leadership as a phenomenon, I used the six key tenets of phenomenology as espoused by Lessem and Schieffer (2010). My co-researchers and I therefore immersed ourselves into the burning issue with the desire to building a foundation for innovation and transformation at the public company and the communities around it before navigating to the next level of Feminist critique in section 1.4.3.

### **1.4.3 Developing new Integral content through Emancipatory critique: *Navigation***

This section is the third part of *Co-Creation*, the third C of the 4Cs rhythm. Researchers continued the interweaving of integral research (the process), integral leadership, culture, enterprise and economics (the content) following the *GENE* rhythm. We navigated our way with the aim of developing new integral content through emancipatory critique.

To the extent that the burning issue is *leadership failure*, I began by giving a critique of leadership theory before delving into culture and identity. There were also reflections on the marginalisation of managerial leaders before researchers came up with a proposition on a new African integral leadership framework. The elements that contribute towards the development of this framework were presented but first we begin with an appreciation of what feminism is all about.

#### **1.4.3.1 Understanding the core tenets of Feminism**

From phenomenology, the research effort navigated critical terrain of the path *GENE* which is feminism. This is the third level of the Southern relational path, which was then followed at the time, with the following key tenets:

- You aim, through research, to create social change particularly as it relates as much as possible to the condition of women and the marginalised people.
- You see knowledge as a tool for liberation, not domination. Consequently issues of language, gender and power relations take centre stage in feminist ideologies.
- Feminist research strives to represent human diversity through offering new ways of looking at human values and in decision-making, from the perspectives of both men and women. While some status conscious men may think that they are separate and different from other people, the women feel there is dependence on each other and therefore there are no real differences when compared to men.
- Feminist research complements the androcentric (masculine) perspective as it brings also the female perspective with a view to removing distortions brought about by looking at one perspective only.
- As a researcher you as a person are included as you bring in your personal experience in the research process.
- Nature itself is conceptualized as active rather than passive and therefore would require human co-operation and understanding rather than to be manipulated and controlled (Lessem and Schieffer, 2010).

Feminist researchers view knowledge as a tool for liberation and not one for dominating others or creating inequalities and causing stress and conflict. This is prevalent in gender and class issues which in most cases are a result of socio-cultural and historical conditions and which can be altered by human action. The Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire recognized the importance of this knowledge when he wrote about knowledge being used to liberate or to dominate.

It is with this view in mind that knowledge, both explicit and tacit, can become a double edged sword, a strategic resource for managerial leaders when staff is empowered to solve their business problems or they are oppressed when they are overwhelmingly controlled and fail to be innovative at the workplace.

After a thorough critique of the evolution of both Western and African leadership theory over the past 50 years or so researchers noted that Africa has all the indigenous leadership talents that are not being exploited to the full which only need to be developed. The African values are rooted in communalism, collaboration, solidarity, cooperation and generosity. These values are expressed in the philosophy of African humanism or *ubuntu-unhu-botho*. They are readily expressed at gatherings such as weddings where the philosophy is that, “*Joy shared is joy magnified*” and at funerals where people care for one another and express love for humanity and this is expressed in the philosophy that “*pain shared is pain diminished*”.

From navigating critical terrain, researchers moved to the *Effecting* part of the GENE or *Transformation*, by engaging the research community, in order to transform managerial leadership for corporate renewal and corporate performance. This move was to *action research*, in the process changing the path from the Southern relational mode of being, that the research team was grounded in and emerge into the Eastern path of renewal using *co-operative inquiry*.

#### **1.4.4 Actualizing Integral content through Transformative Action: Effecting**

In this section, the fourth level of *Co-Creation*, we continue the interweaving of integral research (the process), integral leadership, culture, enterprise and economics, following the *GENE* rhythm. This is the effecting stage whereby researchers actualized new integral content through transformative action. I engaged the two primary cooperative inquiry groups, one internal to the public company and the other being external which was named *Pundutso* (Transformation or Advancement).

For the burning issue of leadership failure at the workplace in the corporate world, Co-operative Inquiry (CI), which is more inclined to narrative methods and the process of *becoming* is more appropriate than participatory action research at this fourth level of the GENE. We begin with an appreciation of what co-operative inquiry is all about.

##### **1.4.4.1 Understanding cooperative inquiry**

Lessem and Schieffer (2010) posit that co-operative inquiry and its originator, John Heron were born and bred in the West, although Heron is heavily exposed to the North, South and most

particularly, the East. This is probably why such a holistic transformative approach also has shades of humanism, rationalism and empiricism. The following are the key tenets of co-operative inquiry:

- Firstly, you engage in a politically oriented process in a participative form of inquiry with co-researchers who, because they are committed to the research design, are also involved in operational decision making in issues that are important to them.
- Secondly, you are involved in a knowledge-oriented process which is epistemic in nature and scope.
- Thirdly, you engage in an alternating current of informative and transformative inquiries, the latter being the one aligned to Action research.
- Fourthly, you undertake your research in successive action-reflection cycles. Such a four stage process of research cycling has the positive aspect of refining and clarifying the burning issue and the negative side of checking, correcting and amending the topic of inquiry which in our case is leadership failure, corporate underperformance and industry renewal.
- Fifthly, the validity you seek for your research, for Heron, is goodness, trustworthiness and authenticity. This is why members of the CI groups are encouraged to develop ways of working together in authentic collaboration, recognizing that as humanity we are interdependent of one another.

## **1.5 Contribution: Integral Ubuntu leadership**

The Contribution phase was the last stage of the “4 Cs” rhythm whereby researchers shared their contribution with the community and society after building on from the other phases in previous sections, and these are *call, context, and co-creation*. It is acknowledged that there is an alternating CARE rhythm that works in parallel with the 4Cs rhythm and the two engage in spiralling and cyclical movements, going upwards and downwards and even sideways towards Integral development.

This innovative product that came out of the research efforts, is a new African integral *ubuntu* leadership model which was given the *Shona* name “*utungamiriri huzere*” (Integral leadership), thereby bringing in a Zimbabwean and African concept into the leadership phenomenon.

### **1.5.1 The Integral Ubuntu leadership model**

Leadership is about influence (Yukl, 2012), despite the phenomenon being riddled with paradoxes and contradictions (Klenke, 1993). Integral leadership is a perspective that reveals the nature of reality. It is the ability to manage through these paradoxes as one navigates the apparent irreconcilable demands of creating a sustainable growth business. The integral leader that emerges out of our leadership model is one that is able to embrace complexity and paradox, such as we witness in an imbalanced world.

The integral leader (*mutungamiri azere*) for the co-researchers, has very clear values and boundaries even though he continuously evolves, as was established at the research community, in reflections at the *Dare re Utungamiriri* internal CI group and this was confirmed by the *Pundutso external* CI group. The two CI groups worked separately but closely as co-researchers and co-subjects as they went through the four modes of knowing (Heron, 1996). There was sharing of leadership experiences in one another's respective roles at the research community and similarly at *Pundutso* through the systematic process of building up experientially, imaginatively, conceptually and practically, knowledge as we highlighted in 1.4.4 with a view to contributing towards organisational renewal in light of the imbalances in this world. The following concepts coming out of the various cycles of reflection and action between the two CI groups were the building blocks for the new African Integral leadership model:

- While the co-researchers recognized that the linear Newtonian world of science has produced great advances in research, the consensus was that the future will require nonlinear integrated systems of thinking such as we find in integral theory. Therefore, an Integral approach was found necessary and essential for leadership and this combined exogenous and indigenous theories of leadership as perspectives were shared from a variety of disciplines.
- Authentic collaboration was at the heart of the *Pundutso* and *Dare re Utungamiriri* CI groups that were established. To the extent that the changing world of work has brought new challenges, new skills, information overload and even new stress levels with rising productivity expectations, it was realised that people need to collaborate a lot more in order to succeed.
- Integral leadership strives for wholeness and completeness. As such, researchers found that leading a balanced life is essential to becoming a *total person (munhu ane unhu)* and applying the GENE transformative rhythm, they identified four areas of life (narrowed down from initial six) namely Family, Spiritual, Corporate and Educational that an integral leader should maintain in proper perspective. He is grounded in a solid *family*, emerges as a God fearing person, navigates through his corporate responsibilities and is transformed through education (effecting) as in Figure 3:

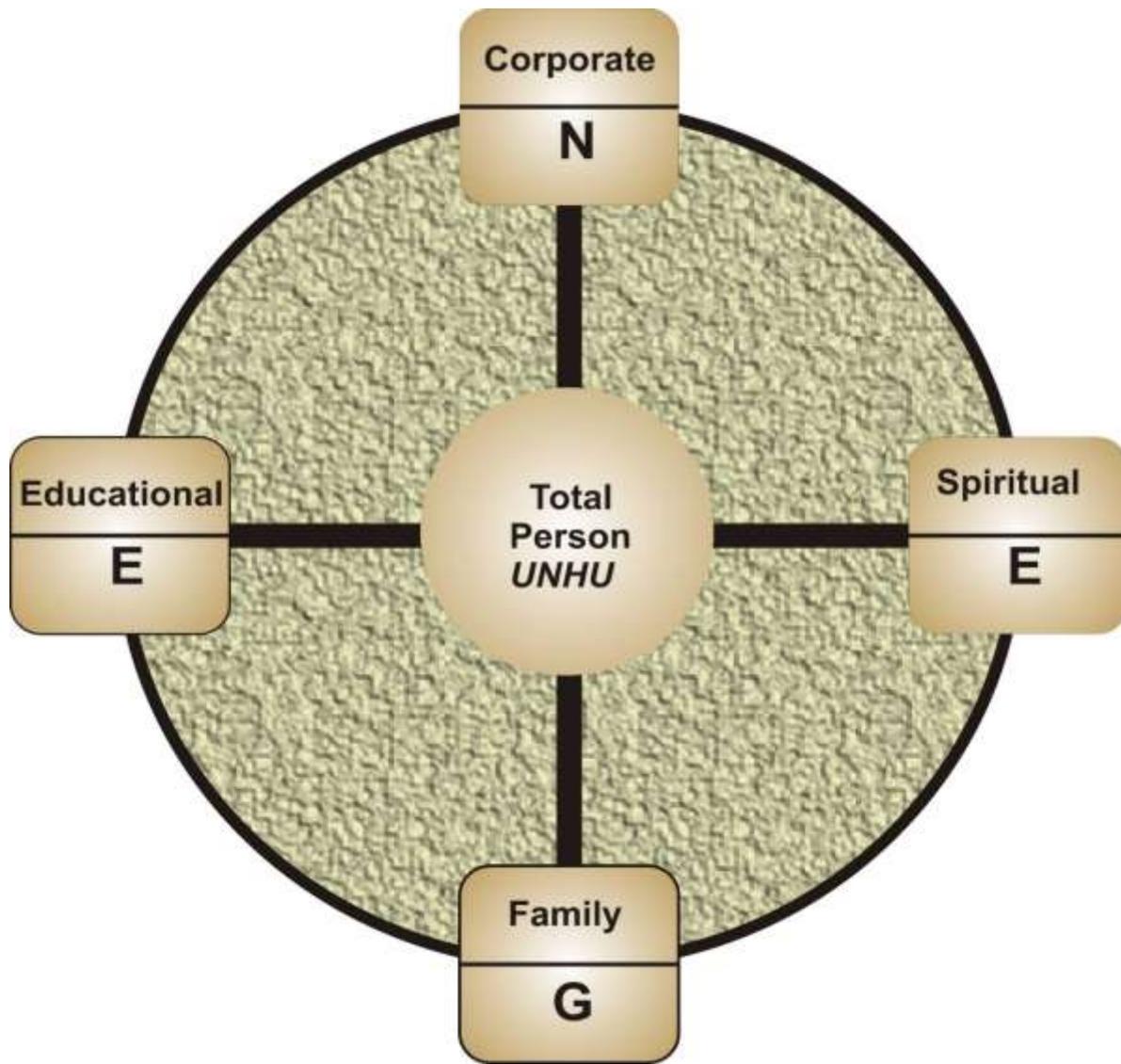


Figure 3. Four areas of the Wheel of life (Adapted from Meyer and Slechta, 2002 and built on the GENE from Lessem and Schieffer, 2009).

- Researchers came up with overarching factors that are essential for the success of the leadership model. In this respect they identified seven factors which are knowledge, common goals, the environment, systems, culture, attitudes and the level of motivation.
- Personal values being the views and ideals which an individual chooses to uphold which determine how that individual lives his life were found influencing the actions a person takes at the workplace. They also came up with seven values which are *hard work, godliness, commitment, professionalism, integrity, morality* and *fairness*.

The outcome of the two groups' CI collaboration and that of going through the experiential, imaginal, conceptual and practical modes of knowing was initially a static generic Integral

Leadership model as shown in Figure 4: before it evolved further as the researchers got transformed, and it became the new African *ubuntu* integral leadership model as in Figure 5. We begin with a brief description of the generic model first.

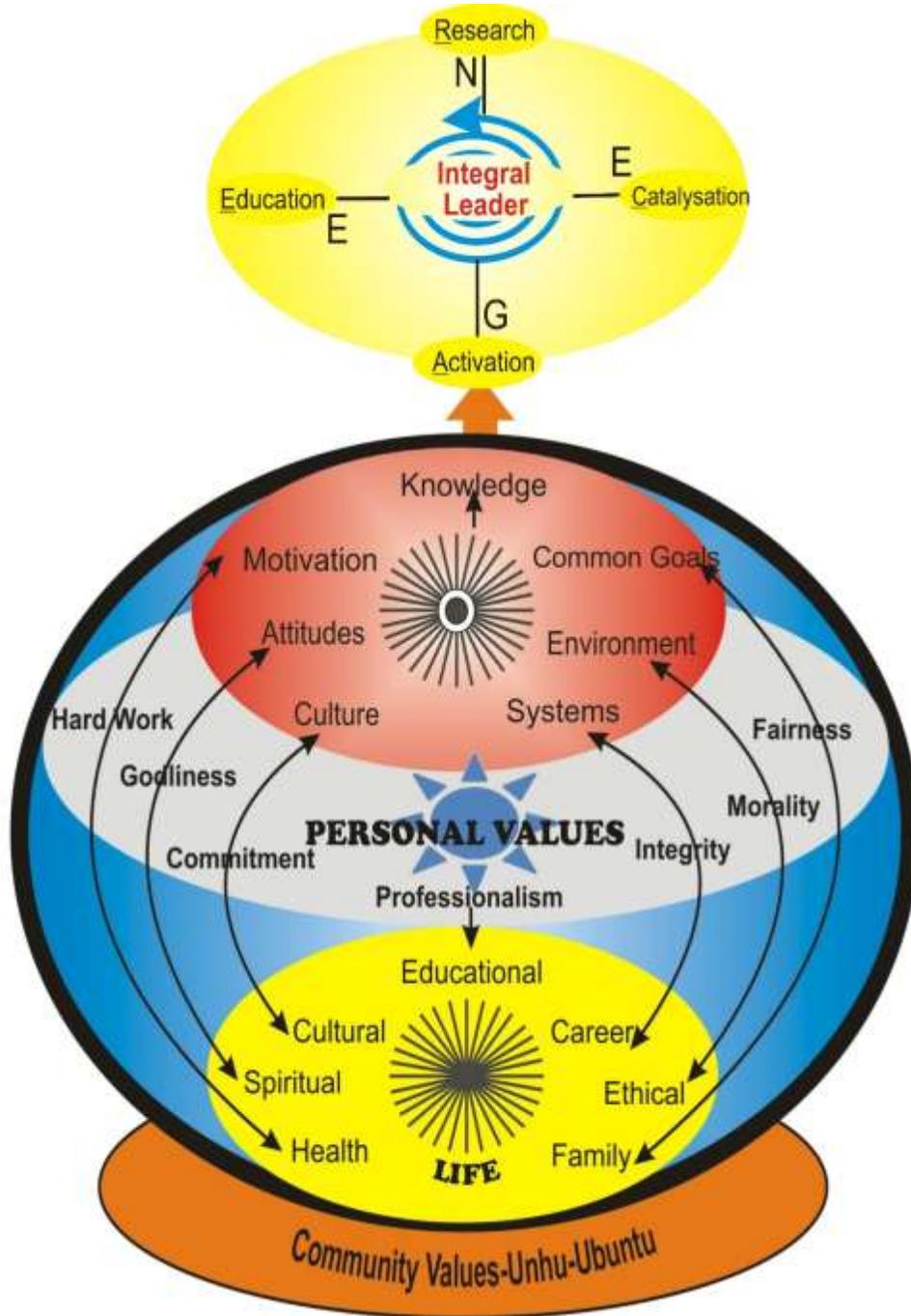


Figure 4. A generic integral leadership model

From the Knowledge that came out of the cycles of reflection and action by the two CI groups, it was generally agreed that what then came out as a generic leadership model should be founded on *ubuntu-unhu-botho* (humanness), a social philosophy which has been in existence for thousands of years. The philosophy is expressed in the saying “*I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am*” (Mbiti, 1969: 202). One of the co-researchers Joshua Chinyuku’ fountain of industrial ecology model: *chitubu cheraramiso mumabasa* also recognised *ubuntu* as the underpinning value system. Being connected to others in community, the integral leader lives a balanced life in the four areas of life that were identified as: *family, spiritual, corporate and educational*. In each of the four areas of life the leader demonstrates and conducts his business in line with the seven values alluded to earlier that the two CI groups identified. It is through the assertion of values that progress is made in the development agenda. As co-researchers at the research community, researchers selected seven values as a way of demonstrating the completeness and unity that comes out of the African integral leadership model. Why seven? Seven is the biblical number for completeness.

To cap the wholeness of the generic Integral leadership model, within the spirit of *ubuntu-unhu-botho* (humanness), the two CI groups also came up with seven overarching or factors namely culture, attitudes, motivation, knowledge, systems, common goals and the environment, which all shape the life of the Integral leader. Culture with its holistic perspective is the key to the future (Schafer, 1996) and progress is made when the goals being pursued by the people are clear and known. When there is unity of purpose and positive innovative mental attitudes within a work environment which cultivates trust from followers, success is guaranteed. That way the leader becomes a role model who works for the success of his organisation, be it in politics or in business.

The generic model was presented to a group of managers at the research community at the group’s two day strategy check session that was attended by over twenty middle to top management in May 2013 and September 2013. When the group was split into four Divisions, only one Division interacted well exhibiting the *ubuntu-unhu-botho* (humanness) spirit. Consequently, they came out strongly as a cohesive team in terms of effectiveness in addressing the goals that had been set before the two day session began. Other divisions admitted openly that their greatest learning was that they did not invest sufficient time in developing relationships over the two day session. The *ubuntu-unhu-botho* (humanness) spirit was not kindled and so they did not gel as teams. The result was that they did not achieve much in addressing set goals.

As each researcher experienced personal transformation along the integral journey together with other co-researchers, a more dynamic African Integral Leadership model evolved and was named, “*utungamiriri uzere*”(Integral leadership). The model incorporated a lot more indigenous perspectives than in the generic model and this is shown in Figure 5.

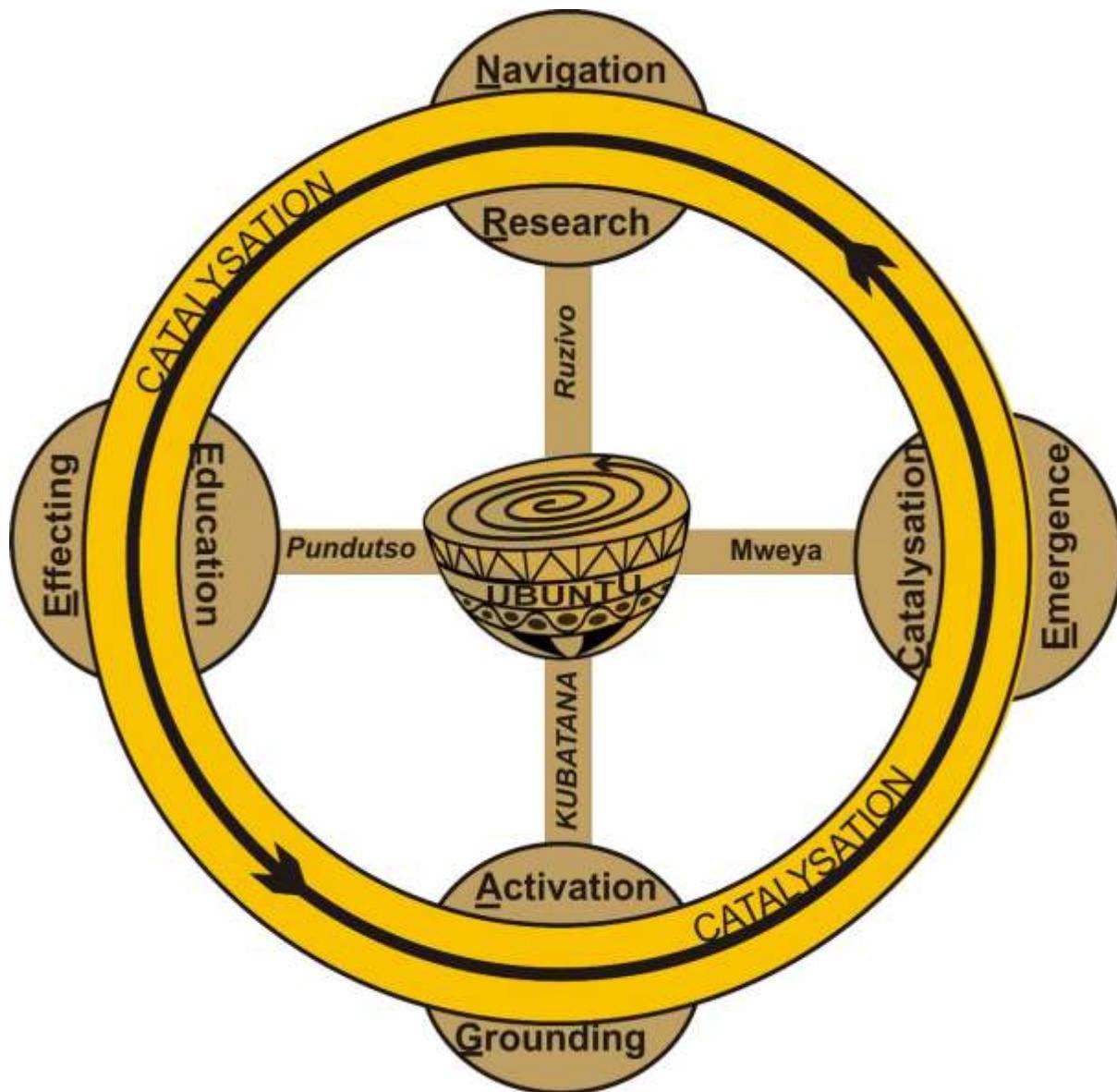


Figure 5. Utungamiriri huzere: The new African ubuntu integral leadership model

To that end the co-searchers were of one accord that leadership failure could best be addressed when a new leadership model is centred on *ubuntu* (in Nguni languages), *botho* (in SeSotho) and *unhu* (in Shona). The philosophy acknowledges our interconnectedness as a community, be it in the village or at the workplace, living together with respect, compassion, dignity and with harmonious relationships. The *calabash of knowledge* model developed by the other co-researcher, Elizabeth Mamukwa also recognises the centrality of relationships in knowledge creation. It is from communities that solutions to problems are sought and for Africa in general, these communities are the cornerstones of African thought and life.

The integral leader that emerges from this model is better placed to address the imbalances of the twenty first century, not only in Zimbabwe but regionally and globally. The spiral in the centre of the African calabash, home for *ubuntu*, demonstrates his capacity to repeatedly influence

other people in a “CARE-ing” manner which was demonstrated at the research community and at the *Pundutso* CI group as well as in the researchers’ other personal roles at church and in their own organisations. The “CARE-ing” logic was applied at the company as a learning organisation through the CI group’s cycles of reflection and action. Each one of the co-researchers, being in the leadership positions of the organisation, was encouraged in the true spirit of *ubuntu* grounding, to purposefully become what Senge (1990) referred to as a “steward” of the Group’s vision. As such they became the Activists for the organisation, making sure everyone including themselves learnt new ideas in the process and their divisions were led as cohesive units.

From grounding the Integral leaders emerged, if we follow the GENE rhythm, into Catalysts or Senge’s description of leaders as ‘designers’ who design learning processes in the learning organisation with respect to integrating the organisational vision, its values and purpose, systems thinking as well as the deeply ingrained assumptions and generalizations. This catalysation role was very important at the workplace, as it involved conscientising the workforce to learn and develop to their full potential. The value of conscientisation was long recognized by Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) who argued that the journey from central planning to the new capacity of awareness based collective action, is a journey of increasing our degree of consciousness and interiorizing the whole. This “consciousness” was considered by these two German authors as the *blind spot in the twentieth-century toolkit of economics and management*. It is vital that humanity as a total system, senses what is emerging in this world of imbalances and devises ways of engaging the situation in order to come up with different results for the good of all. In other words all the divisions of the research community were primed to create new forms of organisation where staff collaborated in creating a new future that addresses the existing structural disconnects, which are prevalent in the current world system. The disconnects are in such areas as business leadership at various levels and also in the financing of the operations where due to liquidity challenges in 2013 and 2014 in Zimbabwe, the researched company just like most other companies, was struggling to raise working capital. Technology is also an issue for industry as companies are working with obsolete machinery and the financial constraints are such that they have no resources to upgrade it. With such imbalances, there is the danger that the company’s value system is weakened and governance issues get compromised; staff begin to engage in corrupt activities, becoming self-centred and egoistic in the process. Consequently, things do not work properly and the results that are produced are not wanted by anybody, except to be disruptive.

The catalysation process helped to bring the issues to the fore as the leaders navigated to the innovation driven research role which involves the transdisciplinary “Northern” realm of knowledge. It is through the leadership of the research community being the co-researchers and co-subjects in this transformation project that researchers were able to come up with the new African integral leadership model. Senge did not have a description of a leader that would fit into the research and innovation component of the “CARE-ing” logic, probably because he had his own logic he was working from. However, Lessem and Schieffer (2010) have their Integral research and Innovation, which adequately covers the Northern realm.

From the Northern realm, we now complete the effecting part of the “CARE-ing” logic following the Gene rhythm as the leaders at the company assumed the role of “Teachers” who were and are educating the workforce so that they face reality and see the big picture and avoid operating in separate silos. The leadership and their staff shared the teachings from past successes and failures particularly with respect to the production processes, raw material availability and the

issues of product quality. This platform for knowledge sharing and capacity building could probably assume from the Western realm, the label of a University of Life although the structure of learning is not necessarily that of a formal University as we know it today.

New processes, practices, products and services were developed from time to time and tried out for the betterment of the organisation. We are reminded of the carpet company Interface in the United States of America (USA), which became the first company to develop processes for recycling old carpets, reducing water use and contamination and achieving negative net greenhouse emissions (Anderson and White, 2009). Ray Anderson, carpet mogul and founder of Interface, who later became an environmental hero proved that profit and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. His company became a learning organisation with a mixture of successful experiments as well as acknowledgement of failures when they occurred and these are the typical patterns of a University of Life.

With some of these success stories, little wonder then that Scharmer and Kaufer (2013:30) advocate a move in such a learning organisation from ego-system to eco-system economics when they wrote:

*Today's real economy is a set of highly interdependent eco-systems, but the consciousness of the players within them is fragmented into a set of ego-systems. Instead of encompassing the whole, the awareness of the players in the larger system is bounded by its smaller subparts. The gap between eco-system reality and ego-system consciousness may well be the most important leadership challenge today in business government and in civil society.*

For that to be achieved requires societal catalysation and this is where it was felt *Pundutso* could take the lead as part of its evolution and this is now another area for future research and innovation as the Pundutso Research Academy is launched.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Leadership is one of the most complex phenomena to be researched on, and it has evolved over a long period. What is considered as the foundation of leadership theory is primarily from a Western leadership perspective, which in itself is problematic in that it universalizes what is only coming out of the West but omitting the voices of other non-Western perspectives especially the marginalised Southern and Eastern ones (Nkomo, 2006). Moreover, the research paths followed are primarily those that follow the conventional research methods

In this article, I followed a new research paradigm, the integral research and innovation approach developed by Lessem and Schieffer (2010), whereby varied aspects of the human system, that is, nature and community, culture and spirituality, science, economy, and technology are pursued to unlock value for Zimbabwe and the world's transcultural, transdisciplinary, transformational and transpersonal imbalances and inform progressive leadership.

Through an integral doctoral research journey under the supervision of Lessem and Schieffer, the contribution that came out of my research process is an Integral Ubuntu *leadership* model, coming out of subjective inner calling or burning desire for individual, organisational and societal renewal, and this is linked to the outer challenge or burning issue of Leadership Failure.

In the Zimbabwean context this innovation was coined “*Utungamiriri huzere*”, thereby bringing a Zimbabwean and African concept into the leadership phenomenon.

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