UBUNTU’S POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This proposal’s goal is to examine and critically assess the ways South Africa has used ubuntu for peace reconciliation, peace education, curriculum reform, and an overall peaceful transformation from apartheid to determine ubuntu’s potential for further development in other areas in South Africa.

Chapter 1 presents an analysis of ubuntu and its use during the TRC. Chapter 2 shows how ubuntu was integrated into the education curriculum in years right after apartheid ended. Chapter 3 presents and evaluates the status of South Africa’s education system today. Chapter 4 summarizes the main findings of the thesis and presents an overall assessment of the uses for ubuntu globally or locally in South Africa. It also examines the possibility of ubuntu’s decline because its inability to offer anything to the modern world which South Africa is a part.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and ubuntu turned out to be a powerful and successful combination. The TRC’s identified successes and failures have been translated into lessons learned for other countries designing and implementing peace processes. Some aspects to consider include South Africa’s Christian majority as an important advantage of the reconciliation process of forgiveness. The use of ubuntu in the TRC does not dismiss a risk of future retaliation.
from feelings of forced compromise and excessive conformism which are core values of ubuntu, especially in the areas of gender inequality which are still prevalent in South Africa, and notably in the education system.

South Africans were able to move on by using a simple yet traditional way of living and applying it to a modern-day problems successfully. If ubuntu was used successfully during the TRC and later on proved to be successful in South Africa’s education system and curriculum reform, then there may be other hidden yet possible uses for ubuntu in other areas of South Africa which need improvement.

During the end of apartheid, ubuntu offered hope and faith that South Africa would fix a South African problem by using a traditional system. Soon after, ubuntu was used to transform the education system in order to make it fairer for all students and later to improve efficiency in the education system. Although South Africans run the risk of losing the value of ubuntu and its applicability in the education system and in the country, for now ubuntu is here to stay. South Africans, need for tradition as an inspiration to move forward in the modern world is what continues to keep the spirit of ubuntu alive.
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INTRODUCTION

South Africa’s history and reconciliation process have been admired and considered a foundation, especially for the many countries in the African continent which are in conflict. Its transformation after apartheid is a noteworthy story which is attributed to the efforts of South Africans and the application of concepts and values embedded in African traditions and way of life called “Ubuntu.” The successful use of ubuntu during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proved its potential for use in other areas with dire need for improvement during the post-apartheid years. In particular, South Africa’s educational system transformed its curriculum by applying the fundamentals of ubuntu. Known throughout South Africa and around the world: “The story of South Africa’s transformation needs to be told, and retold, to be listened to, and finally, understood as one of the great miracles of our world today.”

South Africa is a nation that despite centuries of conflict has reached relative peace and stability during the last twenty years. This work will explore and critically assess the ways in which South Africa’s implementation of ubuntu for national reconciliation, peace education, and curriculum reform as part of its overall peaceful transformation from apartheid. The application of Ubuntu’s potential for further development in other areas in South Africa will also be addressed. Some of the values that will come into focus throughout this thesis include Christianity, community life, family, and the promotion of peace. Specifically, I will explore the relative importance of South African Christian values, Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s leadership, and
 ubuntu’s sense of community as major contributing factors to the success of attaining a peaceful climate in South Africa.

An interdisciplinary approach will be utilized by drawing on and integrating materials and methods from applicable disciplines including history (for background and understanding of South Africa’s conflict), anthropology (particularly regarding African cultural values), sociology (for analysis of conflict resolution processes), political science and education.

**Historical Transformations in South Africa**

South Africa’s original inhabitants were the San and the Khoekhoe, Bantu-speaking Xhosa people. They were invaded in 1652 by the Dutch, who landed at Cape of Good Hope and were interested in the Eastern trade route. In 1657, nine Dutch men were officially granted land to farm and in 1662, 250 people settled in what looked like a developing colony. British and Dutch fought over the colony for many years; in 1806 the British occupied the Cape for the second time and in 1814, the colony was officially taken over from the Dutch by Britain. The South Africa Act of 1909 created the Union of South Africa dominated by the British. The Natives’ Act of 1913 restricted ownership of land by blacks, leaving natives in control of only 7 percent of the country’s land.

In 1931 the United Kingdom granted independence to the union and in 1934 the South African Party and National Party merged and formed the United Party. The formation of the United Party was a symbol of reconciliation between Afrikaners and English-speaking “Whites;” however, this union only lasted until 1939 when the
groups disagreed about supporting the United Kingdom in World War II. The National Party was elected in 1948, and with this, the government officially institutionalized segregation, where a minority white population controlled a majority black population. This is when apartheid began:

The White minority is primarily composed of two distinct groups: the Afrikaners who speak Afrikaans and are descended from the original Dutch settlers who first came in 1652 to South Africa and the English who came originally from Great Britain and whose main settlements were from 1820 on. There are also Colored (mixed race) people and Asians with primarily East Indian heritage.²

During the years of apartheid, education for black South Africans was almost non-existent. Black students were unable to attend school because of high educational costs, and if they did attend, the quality of education was poor. The quality of curriculum received by black students was not the same experience white students had. Watching the Wind, is the story of atrocities thrust on native South African people evokes this feeling: “It grew out of the long, hard, dangerous struggle for freedom from oppression by a remarkable stream of men and women, many of them unrecognized for their valor, which determinedly held onto their sense of humanity in the face of the inhumane.”³ Susan Collin Marks awakens the reader to tell the story of South Africa over and over again. In other words, ubuntu had not been part of South Africans’ identity for many years and when it was re-introduced, as part of a cultural identity versus their identity and way of life, it transformed the country’s history.

Excessive tension between ethnic groups had to end in order for reconciliation to occur:
The establishment of the new South Africa took place after a period of bitter enmity between the black and white populations. This enmity was fed by a civil war of fifteen years. Although this war was never of a high intensity when measured against the intensities of modern warfare, it was enough to cause deep divisions, suspicion and distrust between the two communities. 4

After apartheid, many scholars believed the best way to educate South Africans through a sustainable peace process was to use a traditional South African cultural identity that would unite the two racial groups. Nations that suffer from colonialism:

… usually inherit insufficient infrastructures, old-fashioned political and economic policies and highly divided communities from their previous rulers. They often emerge due to violent resistance and struggle, and even civil wars and ethnic conflict. Moreover, they bear the burden of moral decay. South Africa in 1994 was an excellent example of a community in this predicament. 5

Ubuntu’s fading during the colonial years required its restoration in order to move into a reconciliation period. South Africa’s multiethnic society needed to find a way to re-unite its people, and re-integrating ubuntu in the South African identity achieved a strong, multicultural society.

Uniting the tapestry of this diverse country with a truly South African value would bring this divided country together: “In countries which were previously colonies and oppressed societies, nation-building is a prerequisite for establishing peace, dignity and prosperity. Without this kind of transformation these societies run the risk of imploding due to vast deficiencies in their social fabric.” 6 This was the case for South Africa. Even with curriculum reform in the early 1990s, integrated schools have turned out to be only an adjustment of races, with a continued prevalence of social injustice, especially in schools comprised of a black student body.
Traditional Systems in Africa Similar to Ubuntu

South Africa needed to re-discover its cultural identity in order to introduce an educational philosophy to foster reconciliation. Other African countries in conflict have turned to indigenous traditions to achieve peace: “In the post-conflict era in Mozambique, traditional healing and reconciliation practices were used to enable combatants, particularly child soldiers, to be re-integrated into their communities. In Chad, Niger and Ghana, traditional institutions have been used in the past in order to address the low intensity conflicts that affected these countries.”

After the Rwandan genocide, an indigenous court based system was implemented. “Gacaca” a community-based system for conflict resolution in which the community, perpetrators, and victims all come together and have a say on how a conflict is reconciled. In this case, “the government is making use of the traditional justice and reconciliation system known as gacaca to enable it to try and judge some of those who are accused of having been among the perpetrators of the genocide in 1994.” The way gacaca tribunals are run is very similar to the main elements of an ubuntu trial. Both involve the community and bring the victims and perpetrators together to resolve the conflict: “The interesting lesson to learn from this gacaca system is that it is largely organized on the basis of local community involvement.”

Both gacaca and ubuntu offer unique insight in dealing with conflict resolution within the community. “The local community is involved in encouraging the perpetrators to acknowledge what they have done and the victims are involved in determining what
reparations need to be made so that the perpetrator can be re-integrated into the community.”

In these traditional ways of reaching resolution and reconciliation, Africans re-learn their culture and heritage. Community involvement allows community members to feel as a vital part of their justice system. In many conflicts, from genocide to crimes against human rights to civil wars, societies have been broken. In order for a society to come together again there needs to be a symbol of re-integration. In Northern Uganda, the government has been in conflict with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and also with the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM). The Acholi ethnic group is divided due to the area’s many conflicts. Although overwhelmed by As a people, overwhelmed by strife, the Acholi still use the “mato oput” system for conflict resolution and reconciliation. Mato oput is a ceremony in which a member from both parties in conflict drinks the bitter juice that streams from the oput tree. The juice from the oput tree aids reconciliation between parties by reminding them that bitterness leaves a lasting taste. The Acholi also use the mato oput “as an institution to maintain law and order within the society.” Just like ubuntu was used before colonialism, “this mechanism pre-dated the colonial period and is still functioning in some areas”. For the Acholi people, positive relations within the society are important. South Africans who follow ubuntu also place a high value on communal similar to that of the Acholi people. Although the mato oput and the ubuntu systems are similar in promoting reconciliation, they differ since ubuntu is based on forgiveness in order to move on, and mato oput is based on the principle of consensus building.
In South Africa, it was determined by all the groups involved in the reconciliation process that ubuntu would be used to reconcile the same way other African countries had successfully used their own traditional systems. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate the successful applicability of the ubuntu tradition and values in the South African education system and some of the opportunities for its continued use in the future. The use of ubuntu in the education system today will determine whether or not ubuntu is a foundation for future cultural evolution.

Chapter 1 will present an analysis of ubuntu and its use during the TRC. The works of Dirk Louw and Timothy Murithi will be used in analyzing the key concepts of ubuntu. An examination of ubuntu, its positive and negative aspects and the implications of contrasting values from the West, will help determine whether or not there’s broader application in other areas of South Africa.

Three critics of ubuntu are Christoph Marx, Patrick McAllister, and Phillip Higgs. Their works will identify and support possible reasons why ubuntu may not adapt to areas facing cultural tensions. They argue that Ubuntu fosters conformism, avoids real issues, and implementing ubuntu in a culturally divided state would strain human resources. These works present a broader view of the challenges of implementing a cultural belief.

Chapter 2 shows how ubuntu was integrated into the educational curriculum in the years right after apartheid ended. The Encyclopedia of Peace Education on the origins of peace education will aid in framing the way ubuntu was used as a tool, for transforming a colonial system to an apartheid system, to a post-apartheid system, and
molding a segregated and unfair education system. The Department of Education’s “Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy” will aid in understanding the curriculum reforms implemented in order to recognize the previous and continuous use of ubuntu for peace and conflict resolution. A case study based on the re-introduction of ubuntu in schools by involving the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Governing Body (SGB) as facilitators, and its success as a tool to transform violent schools into peaceful educational communities, will be used to reflect the efforts of schools.

Chapter 3 presents and evaluates the status of South Africa’s educational system today, and an ever evolving curriculum. The new Curriculum 2005 was designed to prepare South Africa’s youth to meet the workforce demands of a new globally-integrated South Africa. This current reform will be evaluated to determine its progress over the years and to identify some of the educational system’s new challenges. Three case studies will be presented, one on ubuntu’s leadership model capability for education, the second on children’s knowledge of the meaning of ubuntu, and the third on teachers’ perspectives and knowledge of the meaning of ubuntu. A case study by Vuyisile Msila, to determine if participative-base strategies embedded in ubuntu help school leaders in enhancing teachers’ positive attitudes toward change, will be used to show that ubuntu is still producing positive educational outcomes today despite modern pressures.

Chapter 4 summarizes the main findings and presents an overall assessment of the uses for ubuntu locally in South Africa and globally in countries facing unrest. It
also outlines the possibility of ubuntu becoming irrelevant based on its limitation in the modern world.
CHAPTER 1

UBUNTU CONCEPT, POSITIVE ASPECTS, PROBLEMS, AND THE WEST

In this chapter an analysis of ubuntu and its use during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) will be presented. The ubuntu tradition was used successfully during the TRC and later on for the curriculum reform of South Africa’s educational system. An analysis of ubuntu, its positive and negative aspects, and the implications of its values will help determine whether or not the concept can be adapted to other cultures. The use of ubuntu in the future will be determined by the ability of South Africans to re-invent the way they apply this traditional concept to other areas in dire need of transformation and reconciliation.

The Ubuntu Concept

The meaning of ubuntu is understood in Sotho languages as motho ka batho, which means “a human being is a human being because of other human beings.” A sense of community resonates in this definition and in similar translations in other African languages. The idea of a community connectedness made ubuntu the perfect traditional concept to be used for South Africa’s reconstruction phase:

The Principle of caring for each other’s well-being […] and a spirit of mutual support….Each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through recognition of the individual’s humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.¹

Timothy Murithi presents some of the traits of a person who possesses ubuntu in the following:
In the societies found in these regions of Africa a person who possesses ubuntu is a person who is considered to be generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, and compassionate. […] We are humans because we live through others, we belong, we participate and we share.²

In addition to communalism, interdependence and humanness are also ubuntu core values. Although these values can be attributed to many cultures and groups globally, they are the core values by which many South Africans lived by, especially during transition years before colonialism and apartheid.

Moreover, ubuntu’s core value of communalism places the individual is an extension of the group. Each individual in the community is interdependent and the group’s interest has more power than an individual’s sole interest. Everyone’s well-being is dependent on every other member of the community. The lifestyle and actions of each community member affect the entire group.

Ubuntu does not focus on individualism, although it acknowledges and embraces differences: “For post-apartheid South Africans of all colours, creeds and cultures, Ubuntu dictates that, if we were to be human, we need to recognize the genuine otherness of our fellow citizens.”³ This supports the idea of acknowledging and accepting all ethnic groups living in South Africa. With numerous languages spoken and ethnic groups living in South Africa, the concept of ubuntu is often referred to as the “Rainbow Nation.” South Africa’s population is comprised of many diverse ethnic groups and ubuntu is a system that recognizes differences yet forms bonds of togetherness.
Vuyisile Msila describes the ubuntu concept and its value of acceptance of differences:

Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but ubuntu goes much further; it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference... Ultimately, ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself.⁴

According to Dirk Louw, apartheid unveiled a whole new perspective on South Africa’s diversity. For example, Louw says that South Africa’s diversity is based on many categories: “Categories (that is, besides race and ethnicity) which may assist one in discerning these overlapping groups include inter alia language, religion, class (or income), gender, sexual orientation, age, ability/disability, literate/illiterate, urbanized/non-urbanized, and perhaps even the somewhat controversial categories premodern, modern, postmodern.”⁵ South Africa is the perfect example of a multicultural nation whose constituent communities have been able to live in relative peace for many years after a long history of official racism and conflict. South Africa’s ethnic diversity and its re-adoption of ubuntu as a way of life have enabled it to become a richer nation.

In addition to ubuntu unveiling an adopted perspective, it also revived a value that was buried – deep inside South Africans – in order to reach peace. Ubuntu not only served as a tool to reach reconciliation, but also to move away from colonialism and apartheid. Ubuntu gave South Africans the opportunity to liberate themselves, and their nation from instability and violence. Indigenous South Africans had this shared concept amongst them, ubuntu. The values of ubuntu were able to unite the multi-
ethnic South African population. Ubuntu was buried deeply in the ground, where many generations of South Africans were born and raised without knowing about it until it was uncovered again. The compassion and harmony that ubuntu evokes in South Africans is what enabled a nation to come together and fight for a mutual cause: peace and reconciliation.

Ubuntu’s values are inherent in South Africa’s oral tradition. It is common to use fables, riddles, stories and proverbs to pass traditions to the younger members of the community. Proverbs like “One bell cannot ring on the belt,” “Finger cannot lift up a ring,” “Harvested by one, eaten by many,” and “Beans cooked by many can cook with saliva” all mention the interconnectedness of individuals and the group.

Proverbs that focus on mutual aid as a condition for the individual’s and group’s welfare employ the value of interdependence. For example, “A man here a man there means no fear,” “A neighbor is a sibling,” “Your friend’s problem is your problem,” and “The sickness of the eye is the sickness of the nose” are all African proverbs told orally, that portray and define the true interdependence of ubuntu and the traditions it encapsulates. The proverbs that focus on mutual aid are also another way of communicating and teaching the values of ubuntu orally from generation to generation.

In addition to teaching the lessons of ubuntu with proverbs, riddles, and stories, elders communicate the value of treating everyone in the community as a family member, placing great respect with elders. In fact, members of the community who are older must not be called by their first names, but must be addressed with more
respectful prefixes. Members of the community who are the same age and not biologically related call each other sisters and brothers. This form of addressing individuals was clearly illustrated during the TRC and inclusion of the council of elders during the sessions. In addition to treating elders with more respect than younger members of the community, elders’ knowledge and advice were important for the community’s development and management. This was especially important during this time of conflict, when the group relied on the strength and advice of the older generations. The value placed on elders in the communal group is an attribute held by ubuntu. A council of elders was an integral part of a discussion, there opinion and advice from the taken into consideration before the Chief’s final decision.

People agree that ubuntu is a philosophy, a way of life, and a traditional system of values that makes a person a well-prepared member of an already communalistic and interdependent society. For South Africans, ubuntu was a catalyst for liberation, ending years of atrocities originated by colonialism and apartheid.

**Ubuntu Provided Hope**

During the years of apartheid, the South African population needed hope. Ubuntu was able to give hope to many South Africans who had been victims of human rights violations: “In this sense ubuntu may well serve positive functions, as a form of symbolic empowerment that helps create positive self-image and an intellectual means to grapple with the world.” Although it has taken time for South Africans who were oppressed during apartheid to progress and gain back a sense of dignity, there is now a sense of hope. In the same way communities implement what is most familiar and
comfortable to their needs. Ubuntu was chosen in order to fix a South African problem. African problems should be fixed with African solutions and this is what ubuntu provided for South Africa.

The Problems with Ubuntu

The story of ubuntu in South Africa has been a positive one; however, some major problems have been identified by many critics and scholars. Some of the clear problems with ubuntu are gender inequality, forced consensus, lack of individuality, overbearing conformity, humanism, and finally the ‘agree to disagree’ resolution. Each one of these problems could offset positive development if problems with ubuntu’s concepts are not adapted by South Africans in order to resolve problems of an ever evolving modern world.

In both ubuntu and gacaca systems the Council of elders has traditionally been comprised of all male members. Therefore, gender inequality is a negative aspect of both systems. The ubuntu tradition has always been patriarchal, where women have not been able to take a more active role in the system or access positions of power. This poses a problem in equality, since ubuntu was to aid South Africa in reconstruction and liberation of those who had been oppressed for decades. However, there is still a disconnect between the liberation of South Africans and the liberation of women: “The ubuntu-inspired African….If she is unlucky enough to be female, the African personality does not revolt against the traditionally sanctioned power of males, because their power can only be benevolent.” It is quite clear that the patriarchal aspect of ubuntu prevents women’s empowerment.
A big concern of critics toward ubuntu is the lack of individuality it promotes. The emphasis of interdependence and community life could stymie individual creativity. New ideas promote progress. However, if ubuntu focuses on interdependence, then perhaps it is not the best prescription for moving forward.

Another criticism for ubuntu lies in its humanism. Philip Higgs believes that the humanism in ubuntu limits South Africans from improving their quality of life and advancing into the future. He goes on to discuss the fact that humanism limits a child from becoming a remarkable person: “This indicates that at a fundamental level humanism can only think of education as socialization, as a process of the insertion of newcomers into pre-existing order of humanity.” 9 The humanism of ubuntu discourages any kind of uniqueness and lacks inspirational motivation to create new ideas, two elements that are crucial for progress and reconstruction. Ubuntu’s lack of individuality spawns a greater sense of conformity, with followers taught to ‘fit in’ among the community. Many see ubuntu as going back to the years of colonialism where South Africans were submitted to a forced homogeneity. For example, Christoph Marx describes an ubuntu-inspired African to be “first and foremost, a conformist, who renders government and chief what is due to them.”10 In other words, ubuntu’s lack of individuality prevents its followers from developing their own ideas and acting independently. For those who follow ubuntu, conformism seems to be the status quo and what is accepted.

Although compliance is a positive aspect of ubuntu, it requires consensus, which could result in a negative outcome. Unanimity risks the honesty of individual
experiences and self preservation. For example, there was a possibility during the TRC that certain victims felt it necessary to forgive their offenders for their offences, but only because they did not want to unbalance the group’s consensus. When excessive consensus outweighs an individual’s on critical opinions, there’s risk for deeply rooted animosity.

Patrick McAllister, also a critic of ubuntu, believes that “many of the supposed characteristics of ubuntu, such as compromise and respect for difference, morph neatly into prescriptions for avoiding conflict in a divided society, not for resolving it.” He goes on to comment that the ‘agreeing to disagree’ system “suggests that there are no ways of really coming to grips with problems such as rampant crime, gender bias, class difference, historical inequalities, xenophobia, and the like.” Blind consensus and agreeing to disagree could block South Africans’ sight of potential problems coming to light in the near future.

**Ubuntu versus the West**

Many societies are able to create ways to use their own traditions for conflict resolution and for maintaining peace. They use traditional systems in order to maintain the harmony of the community and to remain living in peaceful state. A Western approach to reconciliation would not have worked; therefore ubuntu was the best choice for South Africa.

Western cultures are also low-context cultures. In high-context cultures, people are part of other people’s life in the community. Members of the community expect to be part of other members of the community’s lives. Members of the community have
an obligation to treat everyone as an extended family. This differs immensely from low-context societies. In Western cultures and societies, individualism is valued above interdependence. High-context cultures can be viewed by Westerners as invasion of privacy or rudeness. Therefore Western cultures and African traditional systems such as ubuntu do not align.

Along the same lines, there is a sense of insecurity as to whether or not ubuntu really works in a multiparty democratic system. “The challenge of affirming unity while valuing diversity, is at the centre of the still raging debate amongst African philosophers concerning the appropriateness of Western style multi-party democracy in African societies.”\textsuperscript{13} This becomes clearer when we look at ubuntu and its value for consensus. Consensus leaves little room for creativity or for a chance to develop new ideas and to stray from a group’s opinion. Western civilizations reward rejection from consensus starting from a young age. For example, children are taught to be creative and form their own hypothesis.

Since globalization is usually associated with Western values such as innovation, individuality, and creativity, ubuntu contradicts a global approach to reconciliation. “Never the less, many have noted, (while achieving differential success at maintaining critical pluralistic perspectives on Africa), that African ways of knowing tend to be enacted and conceptualized as circular, organic, and collectivist, rather than linear, unitized, materialistic and individualistic, as is attributed to Western perspectives.”\textsuperscript{14} In addition, ubuntu’s traditional nature is seen by westerners as too conservative hindering improvement of South Africa in areas of education and
economics. “Ubuntu is essentially conservative, in that it preserves some form of control and influence in the face of rapid change.”

Despite ubuntu’s contrast to western cultures, it enabled South Africa to reach reconciliation on a micro level. This shows that although we live in a globalized world, South Africans find value in traditional systems allowing ubuntu to aid them in modern matters. The South African culture still resonates with the values linked to ubuntu such as interdependence and consensus. Therefore, the traditional aspect of ubuntu creates harmony and as a result, peace when practiced in South African communities. Ubuntu is still a valued philosophy, and South Africans have employed its elasticity and acceptance of differences, showing the West that it is not a rigid concept but one of multifaceted application. Ubuntu’s acceptance of differences has been able to work in an environment that does not host creativity; however, ubuntu when creatively applied to areas in need of change has potential for success.

**The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Ubuntu’s Use in South Africa**

TRCs were not a new concept; in fact many truth commissions have been established in countries such as Argentina, Chad, Chile, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe. TRCs are integrative in nature and they function well with indigenous conflict resolution. In South Africa, the TRC was chosen as the way to achieve reconciliation after apartheid. The commission led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu used ubuntu and his Christian values to lead the collaborative sessions. Tutu believed South Africa’s road to democracy and reconciliation would benefit more from restorative justice versus retributive justice
which is practiced in the West. “He [Desmond Tutu] goes on to clarify ubuntu is linked to the idea of forgiveness. He asserts that to forgive is not just to be altruistic, it is the best form of self-interest because forgiveness gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.”

Tutu also believed the supporters of apartheid were victims. Tutu’s Christian values of compassion and forgiveness were present during the entire TRC process. One could argue that the reason TRC was so successful could be because South Africa’s main problem was ethnic and racial, not religious.

The majority of South Africans are Christians and this system aligns with their traditional beliefs, thus strengthening their resolve. This mutually-reinforcing effect is also apparent in Rwanda and Uganda, as 93 percent of Rwandans are Christians and 82 percent of Ugandans are Christians. The gacaca system was used solely as a tool for transitional justice and as a facilitate reconstruction. Although it does not incorporate Christian values, it does incorporate the human value of a sense of security for the future. On the other hand, the mato oput system also does not incorporate Christian values; rather it focuses on consensus. Traditional systems work in Christian and non-Christian societies as long as the conflict are not rooted in religion.

South Africa’s lack of a functioning judicial system was another reason why the TRC working groups decided on the use of a truth commission rather than employing a court and trial system for reconciliation, as noted here:

> Although it was not framed as such by the Constitutional Court, in the absence of the evidence necessary to achieve effective prosecutions, coupled by the absence of a functional criminal justice system capable of securing such
convictions, this raised the specter of the scenario which clearly do more damage to the forward looking agenda of re-building public confidence in the legal system and the rule of law in South Africa than the apparent impunity based upon a failed prosecutions process.17

The TRC was organized into three different committees. Each committee served a different purpose in the reconciliation process. The three committees were: the Committee on Human Rights Violations, the Committee on Amnesty, and the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation. The Committee on Human Rights Violations confirmed the victims to the community. The Committee on Amnesty was comprised of judges and lawyers who listened to individuals who applied for amnesty and had confessed to violating human rights. The Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation was responsible for producing a report presented to the government, which the government would use to determine the appropriate reparations for the victims.

In order for TRC sessions to function and have a positive outcome, trust between the perpetrator, the victim, and the community had to be re-established. South Africa’s transition system had to be accommodated in such a way that the victims would be able to trust their perpetrators and the community as a whole: “In such transition, where one of the fundamental objectives is to restore the popular credibility of procedural justice, this objective may often appear to in fact be in tension with creative attempts to provide previously silenced victims with a voice and with public acknowledgement for their suffering.”18 Victims would come forward only if they felt
reassured that they would not be attacked later on for making public the offenses they received. Victims came to the sessions for different reasons:

For some, they craved more than anything else the basic information about disappeared relatives, for others the need was for widespread acknowledgement of the torture. Some sought direct confrontation or victim-offender mediation interventions with the perpetrators responsible for their suffering; others only wanted to know of the systematic issues and the commands given which gave rise to their abuse. Some rejected the TRC enterprise entirely and demanded full justice. 19

The TRC working group designed the sessions for victims and perpetrators to come together and bring to light the violations of human rights which occurred during a span of 34 years during the apartheid. The TRC held sessions for two years and reviewed thousands of cases. Each session commenced with a prayer: “Dressed in ecclesiastical garb, Tutu officiated at the hearings as if at a sacred service, opening with prayer, leading hymns, lighting holy candles in memory of those who had fallen.”20 Desmund Tutu and Alex Boraine, a former president of the Methodist Church, set the religious tone for all TRC sessions.

After the prayer, each session progressed with five stages of peace making based on ubuntu societies: first, the perpetrator acknowledged responsibility that shows guilt; second, the perpetrator was encouraged to repent or to demonstrate genuine remorse; third, the perpetrator was encouraged to ask for forgiveness and the victim in turn would be encouraged to show mercy; fourth, at the suggestion of the Council of Elders, the perpetrator was required to pay appropriate compensation or reparations for the wrong done; fifth, the process was consolidated by encouraging the parties to commit themselves to reconciliation.
Furthermore, the establishment of trust between the offender, the victim and the community led to forgiveness. After the offended citizen had forgiven the offender, he or she received reparations if necessary: “It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness, as well as a rationale for sacrificing or relinquishing the desire to exact revenge for past wrongs.”21 The whole process of asking for forgiveness and receiving it was done in front of the entire community. The media played an important role in making the TRC sessions as public as possible. “The consistently high ratings received by the live TRC radio broadcasts and the weekly TRC Special Report with Max du Preez on television are evidence that the hearings did indeed enthral much of the nation.”22 Print media would not have been as effective to the South African populations since there was an illiterate majority. “Instead, the live broadcasting of the hearings conveyed a sense of collective importance, simply by simultaneously reaching such a broad audience.”23 The interdependence of the individual and the community resonated in the way that the community was present and engaged during the sessions. The success of the techniques implemented depended on the entire community’s involvement.

Finally, the presence of the community validated the reconciliation and peace process. In an ubuntu society, if the community is at peace, everyone is at peace, but if one person is in conflict, then the entire community is in conflict: “A law-breaking individual thus transforms his or her group into a law-breaking group. In the same way, a disputing individual transforms his or her group into a disputing group.”24
The transparency of broadcasting South Africa’s first democratic election and the TRC’s impact in local and international communities were mutually beneficial. South Africa’s first democratic elections were broadcast world-wide just as the TRC sessions were broadcast for all South Africans to have the opportunity of involvement in a successful reconciliation process.

The result was uniquely powerful whereby a full spectrum of those who suffered gross violations of their human rights within the conflicts of the past, testified before the Committee and before the South African public. The social impact of this process of public testimony has been the greatest achievement of the TRC – and will undoubtedly have a pervasive influence on South Africa society in the years to come.\(^{25}\)

The ubuntu way was the most appropriate system that could have been used for this situation and was the solution with the largest yield of success. A South African tradition was used to fix a South African problem. South Africa’s particular situation and combination of circumstances called for a system of reconciliation that catered to its specific needs and would be sustainable over time despite an extensive apartheid. “This notion of ubuntu sheds light on the importance of building peace through the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between different peoples.”\(^{26}\) The ubuntu value system based on communal life was adopting forgiveness and moving forward.

Moreover, the fact that human rights violations occurred over the 34-year apartheid era made the TRC a better system than taking all the violation cases to a human rights court. Many of the victims did not know the perpetrators and would have been unable to reach just reconciliation or receive reparations. In order to have trials
instead of a truth commission, judges would require hard evidence. Some of the crimes committed had occurred decades earlier, making the collection of evidence impossible.

Just like South Africa is referred to as the “rainbow nation” due to its cultural and ethnic diversity, so was the TRCs working group members’ professional backgrounds. The group that designed and implemented the TRC was comprised of politicians, psychologists, and theologians. The diverse background of the working group members provided the TRC with a holistic view on programs and better understanding of a diverse population. Among the reasons to choose the TRC as the best option for South Africa was the timing of the atrocities, an emphasis on healing, and a Christian-majority South Africa. All of these elements created a sustainable and practical system. In addition, other truth commissions had been used around the globe and stood as successful models for reconciliation.

The TRC’s Committee on Human Rights Violations thought that one of the highest emphases should be set on healing the community in order for everyone to move forward. The years of apartheid created deep wounds which prevented South Africans from progressing in the areas of community building, education, and economics. The psychologists in the TRC working group wanted the emphasis placed on healing as well as forgiveness. “Psychologists who supported the TRC (a third of commissioners came from the mental health profession) point to individual healing as an important goal. They point to the need for victims to relive the past in order to
come to terms with it. They insist on the benefit of speaking out.”27 This tactic had been used successfully during truth commissions in other countries.

South Africa’s Christian majority and the involvement of theologians in the reconciliation process gave moral support to the TRC. The ubuntu tradition intertwined with the TRC system was well accepted by the Christian majority in South Africa. Forgiveness and reconciliation are traits associated with Christianity, therefore, a majority Christian nation was well accepting of this system.

The emphasis on healing, the Christian majority, and the timing were not the only reasons for choosing such a system. In addition to emphasizing healing and forgiveness, the TRC’s Committee on Human Rights Violations included the need for understanding as another aspect the commission should encourage and promote:

A truth commission that endeavored to get at the ‘causes, motives, and perspectives’ of perpetrators will provide a better understanding of the past and a more comprehensive history than prosecutions can provide. The very fact of asking perpetrators for their insights into their behavior may lead to a better understanding between members of society.28

Conclusion

South Africa is a nation that has been able to overcome the divisions that had caused so many deaths and years of conflict. The lack of a sole South African identity is what encouraged the country to go back to its roots and find a shared identity for rebuilding a new united and peaceful country. The South African use of ubuntu in order to resolve and reunite the country was the best way to bring peace to the country.

Using ubuntu’s traditional ways for reconciliation was advantageous for South Africa, just as the use of other African traditional systems has been beneficial for
countries in conflict such as Rwanda, Somalia, and Uganda. South Africa’s advantages to using the TRC in the reconciliation process provided an opportunity for negotiation, compromise and dialogue.

The TRC and ubuntu turned out to be a powerful and successful combination. The TRC’s identified successes and failures have been translated into lessons learned for other countries designing and implementing peace processes. Some aspects to consider include South Africa’s Christian majority as an important advantage of the reconciliation process. South Africans were able to move on by using a simple yet traditional way of living and applying it successfully to a modern-day problem. On the other hand, the use of ubuntu in the TRC does not discount the risk of a possible future retaliation from feelings of forced compromise and excessive conformism which are core values of ubuntu, especially in the areas of gender inequality which is still prevalent in South African culture.
CHAPTER 2

UBUNTU AND PEACE EDUCATION

In this chapter, a brief introduction to peace education will be presented with information on how the educational system and curriculum in South Africa were transformed with the use of the ubuntu tradition. The origins of peace education will aid in framing the way ubuntu was used in this case, for transforming and integrating a segregated and unfair educational system. The transformation of the education system from pre-colonial, to colonial, to apartheid, to post-apartheid times will be explored. Two curriculum changes, one in 1996 and 2001, made by the South African Department of Education (DoE) will be identified. The details of both modifications that were implemented have to do with the DoE’s goal to resolve clear problems within the system. A case study will be presented in order to demonstrate the potential for the use of ubuntu to promote democratic values and student empowerment in the classroom.

Introduction to Peace Education

There are numerous definitions for Peace Education. The United Nations (UN) defines Peace Education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioral changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Since the 1990s, the UN has considered quality education to include a component of peace
education in school systems at a local and global level. The UN also believes and supports peace education as a preventive mechanism to avoid conflict, as well as absolutely necessary to be included in the education system of nations in conflict.

In other words, through its agencies (e.g., the Ministry of Education) a society can set its objectives for peace education, prepare the curriculum, delineate the contents of the textbooks and instructional materials, set guidelines for organizing the political climate in the schools, add extracurricular programs, train teachers, instruct schools to show initiative, and oblige students to participate in this learning.¹

**Challenges of Peace Education Implementation**

Peace education could be the most economical way of resolving conflict. Ian Harris suggests peace education can be started in small groups, in communities with little or no money required. If education is easily shared and economical to promote, then it should be employed everywhere in order to end or prevent conflict. Yet, this is not the case because many countries in conflict lack organization to implement these programs, a key element to the success of peace education.

In indigenous societies community-based education is the source which children learn with no formal curriculum. Customs and traditions are transmitted orally by the older members to the younger members of the community, creating a robust oral history.

While community-based peace education has existed for hundreds of years, it is not the solution for all types of conflicts. Just like there are different learning styles in education, conflicts are unique and need to be approached differently. Therefore resolutions must be designed and executed according to the type of conflict at
hand. For example, community-based peace education has been effective with indigenous groups before; however, they have not been very effective in more developed societies where arms proliferation exists.

Ideally every society would be able to organize the type of peace education it is willing and able to promote. But this is not the case for countries in conflict caused by economic factors or ethnic conflict. In countries with extreme poverty, peace education is considered secondary, and dealt with after everyone has food and shelter.

The reduction of educational spending during times of conflict and during times of reconstruction is another result of a country’s economic constraints. Cuts in education budgets affect children directly in and outside the classroom. The lack of funds and infrastructure cause schools to teach without basic educational supplies such as chalk, desks and textbooks, fundamentals required to promote learning. Some schools have no running water and lack sanitary conditions conducive to a healthy learning environment.

**Pre-colonial, Colonial, and Apartheid Education**

South Africa’s pre-colonial education consisted of community based learning. Older members of the community taught in an oral form to the younger members of the community. Sometimes teaching consisted of traditional ceremonies to represent the rite of passage from one age group to another. “Accordingly, the process of education in African traditional society was intimately ingrained in the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life of the community.”² Communal life and communal teaching were the rudiments of learning. Many scholars and researchers “have
described the African tradition system of education as education that prepared one for one’s responsibilities as an adult in his home, village or tribe.”³ Each young member of the community learned the duties and trained in the areas they were determined to fulfill during their adult lives. “Notably, African philosophy of traditions education was quite pragmatic and aimed at providing a gate way to the life of the community. It was based on the philosophy of productivity and functionalism.”⁴

Traditional teaching and learning during pre-colonial times was more informal and students were taught by example. There was no formal classroom space designed for teaching; everything was done informally. “African traditional education had been variously described as indigenous, pre-colonial and informal or community based education. The descriptions were predicated on the fact that there were no schools of the modern type and no professional teachers as found in the modern system.”⁵ This system is different from the classroom teaching done during the apartheid years where students would recite back the lessons the teachers taught; however, the communal way of teaching during the pre-colonial times emphasized collaboration and communication between students and instructors.

Although the educational system during the pre-colonial and pre-apartheid years was done in an informal setting with no designated space, the curriculum was diverse in its content. The curriculum during that time included the human component which is a value of the ubuntu tradition: “The African traditional education curriculum, though not documented, was quite elaborate, embracing all aspects of human
development. The content of curriculum include: mental broadening, physical fitness, moral uprightness, religious deference, good social adjustment and interaction.”

After the arrival of Dutch colonists in 1652, South African education during the pre-colonial times changed drastically as noted here:

Traditional education was led by community elders through oral tradition based on cultural transmission and was closely integrated with life experience. The first European settlers introduced an era of slave education based on simple Christian religious instruction. The early 1800s saw an era of mission education in which Christian missionary societies introduced a European form of education to the schools.

During colonial times, classrooms were run by an authoritarian system. In Africa, the systems imposed became teacher-centered and not student-centered. In addition, schools became violent, especially during times of conflict.

During the 1920s, an era of Native Education surfaced and a segregated curriculum was introduced in South Africa for the first time. This system of teaching, especially in former colonized countries, relied on a teacher-centered approach. In the classroom, the teacher was the only one with authority, and collaboration was not accepted. A sense of community and consensus were never present in South African schools before ubuntu was introduced: “African schools, along with the majority of schools elsewhere, have been essentially authoritarian institutions with power firmly in the hands of the head teacher and teachers with little student participation in classrooms or school decision making.”
During the years of apartheid, children in classrooms were in direct contact with physical and psychological violence caused by war. In South Africa, many students left school to be part of the resistance to apartheid as noted:

In 1985 school and University students became increasingly militant and, with the South African army being used against its own people, they not only organized widespread boycotts, strikes, rallies, and pickets but also barricaded streets and waged street battles with the police and army. They burned property and attacked people they saw as collaborators. Their slogan became ‘Liberation Now, Education Later.’

Many students who left school to become part of the apartheid resistance had to be trained as adults in order for them to survive economically.

In addition to the prevalent violence, the educational system was racially segregated. South African students attended school based on their skin color: “Before 1994 primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary educational institutions were segregated on the basis of race. Access for blacks to the best training facilities was virtually impossible due to the segregation policy and economic factors.”

**Peace Initiatives in South Africa**

Valerie Dovey from the Center for Conflict Resolution from the University of Cape Town compiled a list of organizations and programs dedicated to peace education in South Africa during the years of reconstruction. Two pioneers of peace education in South Africa have been the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) and the Quaker Peace Centre. These two organizations and other smaller ones have established centers and programs that train, research and collect resources for teachers and students. In addition, the organizations working in South Africa on peace education have
developed programs such as The Open School (which teaches listening skills), the Joint Enrichment Project (teaching young ones decision-making learning processes), and the Institute for a Democratic South Africa (IDASA) that instill life skills such as the practice of democracy and tolerance to South African youth. In addition to the Center for Conflict Resolution and the Quaker Peace Center, there are numerous organizations providing training to teachers and students in areas of conflict resolution. Some of these organizations are The Community Dispute Resolution Trust, the National Institute for Crime and Rehabilitation of Offenders, the Independent Projects Trust, Vuleka Trust, and the Institute for the Study and Resolution Conflict.

Some of the work being done by these organizations has resulted in published materials which have become useful tools for teachers and students. The CCR published *Interactive Skills for South African Youngsters*, the Quaker Peace Center published the *South African Handbook of Education for Peace*, and the IDASA distributed *Long Live Tolerance*. All publications were compiled and housed in a special section in school libraries, where these materials were readily available for use by staff and students. Life Orientation Programs were also introduced in some schools in Cape Town in addition to the creation of the Peace Committee of the South African Teachers’ Association (SATA) that promoted teacher knowledge and training on peace promotion in classrooms.

Although peace education initiatives in South Africa are fairly new, organizations and groups committed to conflict resolution have developed programs that have been beneficial for the development of new generations who are supportive
and willing to dedicate efforts for propagating peace in schools and in their communities. Groups and organizations working in the area of conflict resolution in South Africa have fostered a custom of inclusiveness, creativity, and empowerment teaching peace in schools and in greater South Africa.

**Ubuntu and the Department of Education**

The passage to democracy in 1994 gave South Africa the opportunity to transform its educational system along with their country. The post-apartheid era began with the unveiling of the Interim Constitution of 1993 and with The National Education Policy Act of 1996. “The Interim Constitution of 1993, which framed the values to which the final Constitution had to adhere – was this: there was a need in South Africa ‘for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimization’.”¹¹ The Interim Constitution included the values of ubuntu and new educational curriculum mirrored this important concept. The National Education Policy Act of 1996, which set the stage for transformation in the sector, committed to “enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of rights.”¹²

In South Africa, many programs have been implemented since the 1990s when South Africans were finally able to hold democratic elections. The programs developed during this time involved students, teachers, and parents. The South African DoE realized that it was necessary to involve all the stakeholders interested in a better
educational system. Never before had teachers, parents, and students worked together for one common cause: better education. In addition to involving parents, teachers and students in the community, the writers and designers of curriculum materials were also present during the reconstruction years.

The new curriculum embraced the ubuntu tradition and its integration into the classrooms. “Out of the values of ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the very core of making schools places where the culture of teaching and the culture of learning thrive; of making them dynamic hubs of industry and achievement rather than places of conflict and pain.”

Post-apartheid schools were to become integrated with children from all racial groups. Ubuntu was key for integration because it promoted acceptance and appreciation of differences: “Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but ubuntu goes much further: it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference.”

The new curriculum also promoted multiculturalism: “It requires you to know others if you are to know yourself and if you are to understand your place – and others’ – within a multicultural environment. Ultimately, ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself.”

Before the new curriculum, “Classroom teaching [was] presently overwhelmingly teacher-centered with children sitting in rows and characterized by rote-learning, copying from the blackboard, and recital of answers to teachers’
The inclusion of ubuntu into the curriculum fostered a more creative and collaborative environment in the classroom.

The word “ubuntu” had been added to the South African DoE documents in 1996 and then re-integrated in more modern documents like the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy in 2001. In the same way the ubuntu roots had become lost during the apartheid years and resurfaced during the TRC years, ubuntu was lost at the beginning of the curriculum reform and re-integrated into the educational system as an integral part of learning experience.

**Ubuntu and the 10 Fundamental Values of the Constitution**

In July of 2001, the South African DoE convened a committee in order to address modern-day social challenges the country was facing. The new challenges were different from those arising right after the end of apartheid. The new challenges included crime, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, globalization, and the maintenance of national unity. A report written by the working group on the “Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy” emphasized six qualities the educational system should actively promote. The six qualities were: Equity, Tolerance, Multilingualism, Openness, Accountability and Social Honour. The ten fundamental values of the new constitution included: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect, and reconciliation.
“The Manifesto outlines sixteen strategies for instilling democratic values in young South Africans in the learning environment.” The sixteen educational strategies for promoting democratic values for young South Africans in schools are:

1. Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools
2. Role-modeling: promoting commitment as well as competence among educators
3. Ensuring that every South African is able to read, write, count, and think; ensuring equal access to education
4. Infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights
5. Making arts and culture part of the curriculum
6. Putting history back into the curriculum
7. Introducing religion education into schools
8. Making multilingualism happen
9. Using sports to share social bonds and nurture nation building at schools
10. Promoting anti-racism in schools
11. Freeing the potential of girls as well as boys
12. Dealing with HIV/AIDS and nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility
13. Making schools safe
14. To learn and teach, and ensuring the rule of law in schools
15. Ethics and the environment
16. Nurturing the new patriotism, or affirming our common citizenship

In order to determine whether or not the sixteen educational strategies for promoting democratic values had a chance to transform the educational system during its implementation, Yusef Waghid, author of *Compassion, citizenship and education in South Africa: An opportunity for transformation?*, designed a school-based research project. Waghid’s study was sponsored by the Working Group. Its purpose was to explore the impact of teacher, student, and parent opinions in the shaping and implementing of the newly designed educational strategies.

The procedure of the research consisted in administrating questionnaires to teachers and principals in 97 schools. “Additionally, three hour participatory
workshops were conducted separately with teachers, pupils, and parents in 13 schools.” The working group wanted to use the comments and testimonies of students, teachers and parents “to help reshape further initiatives on ‘Values, Education, and Democracy’.” The working group found that the values instilled discipline and order in the classrooms, however there was a lack of humanity and compassion in the classrooms. Furthermore, the working group concluded that a true educational transformation required a sense of compassion and humanism such as ubuntu to be present in all classrooms.

The initial purpose of the sixteen educational strategies for promoting democratic values was designed and implemented for transforming students into human beings capable of thinking critically, being accountable for their actions, and maintaining a peaceful classroom. A secondary purpose was to encourage teachers to instill democratic values in the classroom. However, “Many educators [were] suspicious of the transition to more democratic schooling, having been trained within the traditional, authoritarian pedagogies and power relations; many of these educators [viewed] the new pedagogical approach as undermining their status, power and respect.” The values of compassion, humanism, and ubuntu were necessary in order to overcome racism, poverty, and an HIV/AIDS pandemic affecting students in South African classrooms. Compassion and humanism would connect students who were divided in different social or health status. Through educational endeavors and teacher modeling, children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds learned tolerance and greater understanding for their peers.
Using Ubuntu Values to create Safer Schools: A Pilot Study

Even though ubuntu was included in the curriculum in the early 1990s violence in South African schools continued to interrupt classes. “A culture of politically inspired violence had replaced the cultures of ubuntu and of teaching and learning in the schools. Despite exhortations to the contrary by the government and education authorities since 1994, learners have not yet developed a vision for their own personal future in the new democracy in South Africa.”

Several groups joined together to resolve and attempt to once more diminish the uprising of violence in classrooms. A non-governmental organization called the Independent Projects Trust (IPT) formed a task team known as the Community Alliance for Safe Schools (CASS) at the end of 1997. CASS is formed by representatives from major players such as Business Against Crime, the police, the Association of School Governing Bodies, provincial government departments, higher education and several NGOs. CAAS produced a practical guide for school governing bodies which include the following key factors and recommendations for enhancing school security: practical ways of enhancing the security of premises; inclusive school management; working with the police; the existence of a school security committee; the development of a written school security plan; combating crime inside the school; improving relationships with the community; and teaching and learning about safety and peace. “IPT has used this material as part of a pilot project with a cluster of three schools in Durban, originally by a sympathetic official of the provincial Ministry of Education, to investigate whether intervention and training coupled with mutual
support between cooperating schools, and between the schools and the police, can reduce incidents of crime and violence.”²²

The pilot study was conducted from April 1999 to April 2000 with the idea that by facilitating workshops on how to implement easy and inexpensive interventions and by partnering the schools governing body with the police, schools could become violence-free and a safe place for students to collaborate and learn. The program would be offered to three schools during three workshops. During the first workshop, a group comprised of the principals, teachers, members of the governing bodies, and members of the council of learners, were asked to complete a 50-point diagnostic questionnaire. Based on the answers the schools could get one of following four security scores: less than 50 – your school has many serious problems to address; 52-70 – your school has a security plan that helps but needs much improvement; 72-80 – your school has many elements of a sound security plan but there remain difficult areas of security to be addressed; and 82-100 – your school security plan is well advanced.

The second workshop “included more on writing a school security plan, on techniques of advocacy and lobbying, on brainstorming, on problem solving skills and managing schools and classrooms democratically.”²³ The third and final workshop “tackled the role of learners in school safety, negotiation skills, communication skills and group problem solving skills.”²⁴ All three schools realized that by engaging in and training together they were able to collaborate and practice the traditional communalism value of ubuntu. The fact that teachers, parents, students, and authorities were all involved in a security plan made schools safety a success. No
group imposed on another group, on the contrary, all points of view and concerns were addressed and all stakeholders were engaged in a consensus dealing with the shared problem of violence in schools.

After the training sessions, students, teachers, parents, and authorities were all asked to provide specific examples, from all three schools, on measures taken in order to combat crime and violence. Some of the examples mentioned include the following: security fences built and repaired; gates/entrances to schools restricted and monitored; school security plans and committees in existence; codes of conduct for staff and students; surveys of types of crime; correspondence with the police; correspondence on security issues between schools; mapping of where crime occurs on the school premises; screening admissions to exclude pupils with record of crime and violence; spot checks by the South African Police Service (SAPS) on bags (and the threat of thereof); changing the bus route so that buses stop at schools; developing a life skills curriculum which actively involves learners tackling issues of crime and violence; increased emphasis on punctuality and the reduction of absenteeism; and the use of counseling rooms where pupils can be counseled about incidents of crime and violence.

One obvious and significant example is that the three schools acting together and in conjunction with the police have managed to get Durban city council to change the bus routes for the learners now stop right outside the school, negating the need for learners to catch buses in the vicinity of the nearby railway station, the scene of regular muggings and incidents of sexual harassment.25
The three schools together were able to empower themselves and involve other governing groups of the community in order to change the bus stops for learners. Two schools had previously tried to do this each on their own and had not been successful. Once more the values of communalism Mawonga primary school and consensus drawn from the ubuntu tradition have surfaced in the South African education system as a form for bringing peace to the classroom.

**Introducing Peace Education and Ubuntu: A Case Study**

In 2009 the *International Journal of Educational Policies* published an article titled “Ubuntu and Peacemaking in Schools,” based on a case study completed at the Mawonga primary schools. The case study focused on a peace education and ubuntu program introduced at the school, situated in a historically black area in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The introduction of peace education and ubuntu into the schools was facilitated by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the School Governing Body (SGB). Incidents of violence during that time in South African schools motivated this case study to be developed and implemented. After the new curriculum had been in place, there was an uprising of violence in some schools: “Occurrences of violent nature such as stabbing are beginning to be commonplace and there is a fear that the kind of learners produced by the schools might not be fully prepared to live with others in a peaceful environment.”

During the years of transformation in South African schools, incidents of violence were almost as common as the violence that occurred during the apartheid years. Children who had only been exposed to violence through apartheid used violence as a way of expressing themselves and coping with the
frustrations of an evolving cultural construct. The curriculum reform had been implemented; however violence in schools was still common. Case studies and pilot studies involving parents, teachers, community members, and student governing bodies turned out to be the most effective way of implementing more peaceful and learner-centered schools.

The DoE SGB policy states that: It will be useful to get the school community involved in the work of the governing body. This will lighten the work load. This means that the governing body should try to learn about the needs of the community and the activities carried out by the community. You should also ensure that the school community knows what you are doing and why. This means that member(s) of the community need to get information easily about the school governing body.27

This supports the ubuntu values of communalism and of involving the entire community in the education efforts of the schools. In a community where ubuntu is present, the community has the right and obligation to be involved in the schools system and activities. In other words, everyone in the community is part of the educational experience provided by the schools to the children.

The development of this program was guided by the need for ubuntu African values to be taught to children in the 6th and 7th grades where there had been reported violent incidents including stabbings, bullying, and the occasional use of drugs. Although the word “ubuntu” had been integrated in the DoE plan and policies, it became quickly apparent that the lack of the ubuntu way of life could be a cause of violence in the classroom. The DoE published its documents as early as 2001, however by 2009 violent acts in schools like the Mawonga primary schools had surfaced again. A combination of many reasons was mentioned as to why violence
returned to schools after the curriculum reform, such as low employment, AIDS/HIV proliferation, and the lack of ubuntu way of life in the schools and community. The purpose of this case study was to implement a program that would prevent the ubuntu values in the education system in South Africa from disappearing.

In the Mawonga primary school as a part of the case study’s procedure, five parents were recruited to host the sessions. Three male and two female parents participated. The five sessions taught to the 6th and 7th graders for 1 hour 3 times per week from May to September were the following: ubuntu, gender and peace; (African) culture and society; growing up in a healthy peaceful environment; Ubuntu, the society and peace; and conflict in the society. Interaction between facilitators and students was encouraged. The value of communalism was transferred by allowing interaction between the facilitators and learners. Teachers and instructors never encouraged students to interact with them in the classrooms during the apartheid years. However, as part of the integration of ubuntu into the curriculum, classes and education in South African schools became more learner-centered. Another aspect of ubuntu that was implemented was the use of non-text book material for teaching such as story-telling. The ubuntu way of life had always been passed on by traditions such as story-telling as a teaching method for younger members of the community: “The facilitators used a number of aids and strategies to facilitate the learning. Drums, clothing, stories including legends, were some of the teaching aids used to facilitate learning.” 28

The scenarios planned by the facilitators were designed for the students to interact in conflict resolution based within the concept of Ubuntu.
The facilitators, who were referred to as coaches, divided the entire group into seven ‘villages’ each with a leader. Villages were supposed to be more effective than others and each of them had rules that were supposed to guide them. The villages were following a strict code of rules that was put down democratically by the ‘people of the village’ (the learners themselves). Among these rules, each village was supposed to lay down rules of protecting the environment, living in peace with others and living for another person as captured by the ubuntu philosophy.29

By completing exercises like the aforementioned, students practiced the ubuntu way of life with a scenario that could be adapted to a situation in the classroom or in their own communities. Students who thought or had been raised thinking that violence was the way to resolve problems, now would be able to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way and in a way that allowed the entire community to be at peace. “The values of ubuntu were emphasized by villagers who wanted to ensure that good happened to fellow villagers at all times.”30

Learners at the Mawonga schools started to see life differently. The ubuntu traditions showed them how their actions impacted the entire community. The ubuntu philosophy taught at this school was also extended to teach students about the impacts of destroying the environment and how it affected not only the community where they studied and lived, but also the communities around them. The concept of ubuntu taught through story-telling and role-playing added value to the learners’ experience and skills in peaceful conflict resolution.

During this case study, the SGB’s main goal was to find out if intervention strategies associated with African values helped schools minimize violence among the student body. The questions the SGB wanted answered included whether peace
education could be enhanced by African values such as ubuntu and whether schools could facilitate the transformation for a better society. What they found was that students “were ‘beginning to find their roots’ as they saw the need for peaceful living and upholding the values of ubuntu.”

Some of the findings as a result of the implementation of programs like this case study include the need for learners to become more receptive to South African democratic values and the need for students to re-claim the classroom and to not have fear to participate and speak up during the learning process. Another lesson learned is that there is a great need for students to understand the environment and to respect it as another member of the community: “This study showed the importance and necessity to facilitate more knowledge on democracy. Ubuntu enshrined this democratic principle. The democratic role of education as highlighted in the Constitution needs to be upheld in the classroom.”

**Conclusion**

This case study represents a clear example of the South African curriculum reform implemented in the post-apartheid years and the fact that even though an African traditional system such as ubuntu was integrated into the curriculum, it still faded away among the new generations in South African schools such as the Mawonga Elementary School and the schools in Durban.

If these lessons are incorporated into educational programs like these and implemented in more schools in South Africa, there will be a higher chance for the ubuntu tradition to remain in the forefront, molding lives of future generations.
The use of ubuntu in the South African educational system was successful in turning a racially divided educational system into an integrated and unified force. Some South African schools have proven that small but effective case studies can make a difference. The early years of the curriculum reform showed more changes than present academic years. Although the ubuntu tradition and the word “ubuntu” is still part of the DoE documents, there are more practical applications for ubuntu today in fixing modern problems like gender inequality, social disparity and bullying in schools. In the next chapter, South Africa’s DoE use of ubuntu will be presented and evaluated in order to determine its effectiveness today, and the evolution of the concept in the future.
CHAPTER 3
THE STATUS OF SOUTH AFRICA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM TODAY

South Africa’s TRC and DoE were able to incorporate the ubuntu tradition into their systems and have been successful during the time of implementation. Its sustainability, on the other hand has been more challenging than the DoE expected. In this chapter, the use of ubuntu in South Africa’s educational system and its more current reform will be evaluated in order to determine its progress over the years, and identify new challenges. Despite the efforts of the DoE’s more recent reform, Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which set out to address South Africa’s modern day and economic problems, it is apparent that many issues are beyond the DoE’s control. In this chapter the results of two case studies based on teachers’ and students’ knowledge of the meaning of ubuntu and its results provide hope for the possibility of further implementation of ubuntu in the educational system.

New Amendments to the Curriculum

As seen in the past two chapters, the South African education system is and will continue to be a work-in-progress. Thus far, the post-apartheid educational system has gone through two major reforms, one in 1994 and again in 1997 when C2005 was launched. In 2001, the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy was published in order to reinforce the previous curriculum change and to help address other issues identified since the reform.

South Africa’s education system has always been molded by the political state of the country at any given time and more recently reflects the country’s economic
issues. For example, the pre-colonial system emphasized community teaching which prepared students for the role they would play in the community. During colonialism, slave education began in Christian schools. Once apartheid was implemented, schools became segregated and it was not until 1994 that de-segregation began. South Africa’s DoE made drastic changes to the educational system directly after elections in 1994. The changes consisted in merging all the different curricula into a single, standard curriculum. In addition, the curriculum was edited to remove any offensive, racial or sexist material. The curriculum also incorporated an assessment component such as the continuous content assessment (CASS) created in 1996.

The purpose of CASS was to increase the number of students who passed to the next grade level. CASS was also intended to aid teachers in assessment of students learning level, charting their progress throughout the academic year. CASS’s main goal was “to improve performance of learning and teaching.” For example, all students would be evaluated using the same examination system and the teacher was more accountable for the content the student learned. Furthermore, teachers were also being evaluated based on the grades their students received.

In March 1997, the newly designed curriculum was launched. C2005 was to be phased out completely by 2005 and was designed in three parts: it was outcomes-based (OBE), had an integrative knowledge system, and promoted learner-centered pedagogy. The OBE system placed emphasis on teachers and demanded changes from them:
Current learning institutions place the teacher in a particular role. The teacher is seen to be in a position of authority to the learner and an authority in terms of content which must be transmitted. The teacher, as opposed to being the repository of all knowledge and wisdom, must now facilitate and mediate the educational experience. The teacher now a facilitator of learning, will create relations between learners and facilitator which engender values based on cooperative learning. The teaching and learning strategies which will mediate the learning are the responsibility of the teacher and must reflect the learning outcome.

OBE is defined as a student-centered teaching pedagogy. The student’s performance is strictly measured by outcomes, and not by measuring the learning resources available to students. OBE requires students to demonstrate that they have learned the content and skills taught. Each school designs the list of outcomes they believe are necessary, in the case of South Africa, all schools are required to follow the outcomes stated by the Department of Education, however because the definitions of the outcome tend to be broad and global in nature, each school interprets the outcomes based on their teachers’ level of training and knowledge.

In the previous curriculum, teachers specialized in one subject and the content and lessons of that one subject did not cross into other subjects, much less integrate the South African Qualifications Authorities’ (SAQA) 12 organizing fields. The 12 organizing fields comprised of all the different possible career areas that students pursue after finishing their basic schooling. C2005 moved away from a fundamental pedagogy towards a progressive pedagogy which was learner-centered and contained learning strategies. The goals of C2005 were to align school work with workplace, social and political goals; to emphasize experimental and cooperative learning; to
pursue the value of diversity in the areas of race, gender, and culture; and to develop citizens who were imaginative and critical problems-solvers.

C2005 was not well received by teachers at first, mostly because it was extremely complex, and compared to the previous curriculum, harder to decipher. Teachers were resistant to change not only because so many components demanded modification, but also because the ubuntu tradition placed value on conformism. For example, in order to understand the entire curriculum, teachers had to become familiar with the concept of “outcomes,” and standardizing bodies such as the South African Qualifications Authorities (SAQA), National Standards Bodies (NSBs), Standards Generating Bodies (SGB), and Education and Training Qualification Agencies (ETQA). The reform also included twelve SAQA fields, eight learning areas of integration, and sixty-six specific outcomes. Many sub-groups were created in order to promote further integration of the eight learning areas which would ultimately create an interdisciplinary curriculum. The traditional subjects such as Arts and Culture, Language, Literacy and Communication, Economic and Management Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Life Orientation, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics, and Mathematical Sciences, Physical and Natural Sciences, and Technology all became integrated within eight learning areas. For example, one of the specific outcomes of the human and social sciences learning area “is active participation in the promotion of a democratic, equitable and just society. Another is that learners will be helped to exercise their responsibilities and rights as citizens.”3
The new curriculum demanded teachers to be more collaborative and emphasized role models as those who lead by example. With C2005, extracurricular activities and clubs were to be led and hosted by teachers. Teachers were going to take more of a leadership role in the classroom and in the way schools were run. More involvement of teachers in all areas of the school meant better outcomes. The new demands placed on teachers by C2005 and the OBE system has not been easy to resolve. Teachers who had been trained during apartheid years received orders in a top-down school management system. During the apartheid years, teachers were not encouraged to be mentors or collaborators in the classroom; rather, their roles were more of a dictator, holding sole authority in the classroom. “The top-down structure was hierarchical and teachers were usually told what to do and what not to do. It is this drop-down culture of the past that is usually blamed for the teachers’ resistance to change initiatives.”

Yet, the interconnected nature of the curriculum gave many school principals the opportunity to integrate an ubuntu system of leadership among the teachers; and although difficult to achieve, one can observe the potential and the role ubuntu played for the success of the curriculum reform called C2005. “Another key feature of Curriculum 2005 is the critical outcomes. These are broad generic cross-curricular outcomes that have been developed to encourage further integration between the different learning areas and to give and integrated approached in all teaching and learning.” The integrative nature of the curriculum encouraged teachers to become interdependent with one another. The connectedness of teachers was designed to
impact the students’ experience in the classrooms and to some extent, the success of children once they transition to adulthood in the South African workforce. C2005’s more interdisciplinary and learner-centered strategy of teaching was designed with South African’s economy in mind. C2005 offered education and training in order to prepare the younger generations for a more global market economy in which South Africans could have a chance to participate and thrive.

Ubuntu was used during the first transformation to standardize the curriculum so all students could receive the same quality of education in a peaceful environment. Ubuntu’s consensus value was emphasized for that specific purpose. However, during this new reform, ubuntu’s value of collaboration and interdependence was used with a creative twist in order to encourage teachers to accept and implement the new and rigorous curriculum changes. A change in the ubuntu perspective and an adjustment in attitudes had to occur in order for teachers to accept reforms and implement them in their learning community. Ubuntu gave teachers enough confidence to accept new leadership roles in the schools, as presented in the following case study.

Vuyisile Msila, a faculty member from the University of South Africa, designed a case study to determine if ubuntu could serve as a leadership model in a school placed in an urban area of the Eastern Cape Township. Msila wanted to determine if participative-based strategies embedded in ubuntu helped school leaders in enhancing teachers’ positive attitude toward change. She interviewed 24 teachers who were in management positions or were Heads of Departments, 13 of whom were male and 11 female.
Some of the questions asked during the interview were: What kind of a leader are you?; Why is collective/participative leadership important?; Should democracy be the cornerstone of leadership? Why?; Is the current change in education necessary?; Do we need ubuntu as a form of leadership in our school? Explain briefly; is it crucial for the principal to be the sole leader in change management? Many teachers were not able to answer all questions the first time around. For example, 70 percent, were not able to describe the role of teachers in the management of curriculum change. Only 65 percent thought the principal should be the sole leader of the school through this change. In addition, 50 percent of teachers were not clear on how ubuntu could be applied in the school.

During the second interview, teachers responded well, and in fact after the third interview, they all had a better idea of how to practice an ubuntu style of leadership. “Workshops on teambuilding, team teaching, as well as coaching are some of the aspects that the principal introduced to enhance the idea of solidarity and the teachers gradually internalized these values.”6 Teacher participation was enhanced and they felt more comfortable sharing skill sets and ideas with their colleagues. The common vision of ubuntu is what helped teachers at the case study school overcome their fear of the unknown for a common good, to foster a collaborative and outcomes-based school. However, the existence of ubuntu on its own is not what has changed the attitudes of teachers in this specific school. The application of ubuntu’s values of solidarity, communalism and interdependence in the school is what adds value to ubuntu’s integration in the educational system.
Previously, each teacher was in charge of their own classroom and negative comradely was present amongst faculty. When the new curriculum was launched and a new principal arrived at the school, teachers were not open to the many changes and challenges the new curriculum posed. Teachers came from a background where input was not valued. The new principal gave teachers a voice and introduced the concept of teams. The formation of teams fostered interdependence, one of the ubuntu values needed in order for change to occur at the school.

Teachers’ new leadership roles were crucial for the implementation and guidance of programs starting in classrooms. The more teachers felt comfortable acting in a leadership role, the better classroom experience the students received. Students’ safety and performance depended on teachers’ willingness to accept and embrace change, one of the core values of ubuntu.

Case studies like the one Vuyisile Msila explored are easily implemented, do not have high overhead costs, and were often successful at applying the numerous components of C2005 in schools throughout South Africa. Furthermore, when curriculum reforms are not addressing modern problems such as bullying in schools, Non-Government Organizations trained in this area are able to implement programs that are successful. For example, one of the NGOs that had been working in South Africa on peace education is The Quaker Peace Centre. The Quaker Peace Centre has designed and implemented programs like Peace Clubs and Peace Buddies, and has been successful and effective more recently at combating violence in schools such as bullying.
Ubuntu and Bullying

To address the problem of bullying in schools, in 2011, the Quaker Peace Center designed an ‘Alternative to Violence Project’ and a manual to assist in confronting bullying in schools titled “My Bully My Bra.” The manual uses ubuntu-like values to explain bullying and present ways it can be prevented and steps towards resolution. The manual is comprised of four main sections: Understanding Bullying; Tackling Bullying; Getting Involved; and Resources for Teachers. In the section on Getting Involved, case studies, comics, stories, and poetry are included as material that can be used by teachers in classrooms as well as material suited for school-age children and teenagers. The inclusion of stories to teach a lesson is one of the ways that ubuntu was traditionally learned, passed from one generation to another through oral tradition. Although there are other preferred ways for younger generations to communicate today, storytelling continues to work as a teaching tool, especially with younger children who do not read yet, but need to be taught about respecting others and being part of a peaceful classroom. The manual’s introduction includes some facts on bullying incidents. The manual also includes statistics based on the data gathered during a survey. For example, “In a survey about the incidence of bullying at schools with 102 peace buddies, we discovered that 95 percent of the respondents had been bullied at some time in their lives. Of those, 50 percent had been bullied at schools. We saw the need to start a discussion about bullying in our schools.”

The program’s mission is to educate students about bullying and to provide them with tools they can use to prevent bullying from continuing in their school. Some
of the elements of the program are: setting up Peace Clubs at schools and establishing peace buddies; mobilizing bystanders to intervene; training peace buddies to act; teaching values of non-violence; and making students aware of the toll-free number to report incidents. Although the word “ubuntu” does not appear anywhere in the entire document, the title and its content represents ubuntu core values. The case studies show that if one child in a school is affected by violence, the other children around him/her will also suffer. The title, “My Bully My Bra”, is also a representation of the brotherhood and sisterhood that ubuntu embraces and supports.

“My Bully My Bra” resonates the interconnectedness that ubuntu entails. The training materials show that if a classmate is affected by bullying, then the entire class is at risk of being bullied in the future, and the harmony and peace of the class is interrupted. In the same way, teachers and parents are part of the bullying prevention community. The cases and examples used in the manual always mention that if one is a victim of bullying, an adult or peer must be notified about the incident. All three players: students, parents, and teachers, are responsible for prevention and also for informing the necessary authorities.. In this case, the communalism value fits well with the purpose and goals of combating bullying, violence in schools and maintaining peace.

The word “ubuntu” is inherent in the lessons included in the document. The use of stories and comics portray the oral tradition of Ubuntu through a modern twist of comics and appealing illustration, Perhaps the lack of inclusion of the word ‘ubuntu’ in the document is a sign of the integration of the value into South African
life. This supports the idea of the ubuntu tradition, leading by example and not necessarily by repeating the word every time an act of ubuntu occurs.

The “My Bully My Bra” program has potential for continued use and has teacher and parent support. Teachers implementation of this program is crucial, setting a standard in and outside of the classroom. The program would not have much success if teachers’ perspectives on how to manage a classroom had not changed when C2005 was implemented.

Teacher empowerment in the area of leadership in the classroom has been crucial for the success of programs. Teachers and staff have served as advisors to the Peace Buddies program and the Peace Clubs based. Community and parent support have lead to strengthened adoption and implementation of programs that promote peace. The reform that staff members underwent was an integral part of implementation, teachers, who once acted like bullies under an authoritative teaching system, are now serving as collaborators and as resources for students.

Parents have also required educating on bullying and how to deal with modern day issues. Parents of school age children were educated during the apartheid years and their idea of violence in schools is very different from children in schools today. Parents who attended schools during the apartheid years used violence to express themselves, or as a coping mechanism for the atrocities witnessed in their communities. Some parents were perennial victims of violence throughout their formative years. This is why communication between parents and teachers is necessary in order to form a symbiotic relationship between both groups.
Programs like Peace Buddies and Peace Clubs have used ubuntu values to fix a modern violence problem such as bullying in schools. Communalism and interdependence between students, parents, and teachers has been the key for the success of programs fostering peace. Ubuntu has connected both generations by drawing from its traditional roots and using tools that all individuals can identify with.

**Urban and Rural Children’s and Teachers’ Perspectives on Ubuntu**

It is important to observe how ubuntu is viewed by two important players in the educational system: students and teachers. Two studies will be used to demonstrate the views of students and teachers. The study with children is based on their understanding of ubuntu. However, the study of teachers’ perspectives is based on their perceptions on the meaning of good citizenship. Both studies will help draw a clearer picture on how the efforts of the curriculum change and the use of ubuntu in the educational system are progressing since their initial implementation in the early 1990s.

For the childrens study, the method and sample consisted of 225 South African children. 80 were from a rural area, 85 from a semi-urban area and 60 from an urban area. The children were aged 7-14 years old and were divided into two groups: 7-10 and 11-14 years old. The study was based on interviews done individually with each child. Each child was asked about his/her understanding of the meaning of the word “Ubuntu.” Each interview was done in the child’s mother tongue and their responses were later translated into English.
The categories the children used to describe the concept of ubuntu were: being respectful; being a good person; good behavior; knowledge; cooperation, sharing interdependence; being peaceful; having good relations with others; obedience; being a good communicator; being well; being reserved; being religious; or in some cases, some children did not know the ubuntu concept. Some children described the concept of ubuntu as ‘being peaceful’. The researchers were impacted by this response since a few years earlier; children in South Africa did not know the concept of a peaceful classroom. In fact, many school-age children used violence as a way to express feelings of frustration.

The meaning of ubuntu was slightly different based on the children’s geographic location. Rural children referred to ubuntu as being respectful towards others by responding with more certainty. For example, when answering the question it took urban children longer to come up with the answer of ‘being respectful to others’ when asked about the meaning of ubuntu. The biggest difference in responses between children in urban and rural areas was the category ‘being a good person’ when asked about people’s innate qualities. Amongst the rural children, 48 percent of them thought that ubuntu meant ‘being a good person,’ but only 21 percent of the urban children thought this and only 34 percent of the semi-urban children thought this as well.

There were 101 older children in the 11 to 14 years old age group and 124 younger children in the 7 to 10 years old group. The categories ‘being respectful to others’ and ‘showing respect’ were used more by the 11 to 14 year olds, 55 percent of
them. However, only 27 percent of the 7 to 10 year olds used the same categories in their responses. Overall, the ‘showing respect for others,’ ‘being respected,’ and ‘being respectful’ categories were used the most among children in both age groups. Themes like cooperation, interdependence, and sharing were known and recognized more by the older children. As mentioned previously, the most popular response given by all children regardless of their age or geographic location was ‘being respectful to others.’

This study is valuable for determining the usability and continuous applicability of ubuntu in the educational system in order to improve the future of schools and to fix other possible new problems in schools or in society. The study demonstrated that the more rural the area in which the children lived, the more generous they were at attributing positive traits to ubuntu and the more secure they were at making their statement when describing what ubuntu meant. This case study shows that there is speculation that a more migratory South Africa might lose its values of ubuntu; especially in urban settings. However, there is still hope amongst South Africans that the migration pattern into the cities will do the work of moving ubuntu from the rural areas where it is still prevalent to the urban areas.

The study based on teachers’ perspective on ubuntu used the responses from 15 teachers from five secondary schools. The method for the study consisted of interviews that were conducted privately and lasted about 35 minutes. The questions teachers were asked included: When you hear the word citizenship, what comes to your mind?; What characteristics do you think of?; When you think of a good citizen
of South Africa, what do you think of?; Why do you so describe him/her?; Why are the characteristics he/she possesses so important?; Would you describe yourself as a good citizen?; If so, in what ways?; If not, why not?; Who strongly influenced you in your growth towards becoming a good citizen?; and Are you rewarded in any way for being a good citizen?.

The study’s hypothesis considered that the teachers’ previous knowledge of the use of ubuntu would gear them to describe good citizenship as someone who possessed characteristics such as “responsible attitude toward the welfare of others; participation within the community; tolerance of a diversity of views; morality; patriotism; knowledge and critical thinking skills.”

Teachers associated three categories with being a good citizen: communitarian, public, and knowledge. The communitarian characteristics where made up of responsibilities, morality, tolerance, and participation. Obedience and patriotism were part of the public characteristics; and the knowledge characteristics where based on awareness of political issues and concepts, knowledge of political structures and systems, and critical thinking.

The study concluded by confirming the hypothesis; teachers who had been exposed to the use of ubuntu before were able to identify characteristics and qualities of people who possess ubuntu. Furthermore, the previous exposure to ubuntu in the teacher population is a fairly good representation of teachers currently in the school system. For example, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the South African Qualifications authority (SAQA), and the National Standard Bodies (NSB)

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have been functioning as part of the DoE since the early 1990s. Almost twenty years have gone by since the first curriculum reform was passed and there is a new generation of teachers who have been taught at the university level and grew up with ubuntu. Furthermore, teachers are being taught at universities as opposed to colleges where they spend longer than one year preparing and training to become effective teachers and leaders. “It can also be constructed as an attempt to inject into the university sector a long-term commitment to teacher provision, rather than conventional one-year diploma.”

These two case studies give insight of the possibility of continuing to use ubuntu as a mainstay in the educational system. The use of ubuntu in the education system could easily continue to be re-invented and re-integrated since two important factors have been demonstrated. Teacher buy-in and more teacher expertise in classrooms, and a reassurance that there is ubuntu knowledge in children in both rural and urban areas.

**Analysis of Case Studies on Ubuntu Use**

In order to demonstrate the resilience and success of the use of ubuntu, it is necessary to analyze more in depth the results of numerous case studies presented in this chapter.

Further analysis of each case study will aid the reader in understanding and visualizing why and how ubuntu is here to stay, especially in the educational system. Ubuntu has pliability and therefore has the potential for creative ways of incorporating its values in an ever changing South African society. Each case study presented
previously has embarked with the idea of using ubuntu to ‘fix’ something and almost always ubuntu has accomplished just that.

In a school setting, children’s perspectives on ubuntu are imperative in understanding the staying power of the ubuntu concept. The case study based on the perspectives of ubuntu by children had as an objective to explore children’s understanding of ubuntu and to determine if there was a difference in understandings based on the children’s ages or their geographical locations. Since there was a difference, this could imply that the ubuntu tradition could be affected by peoples’ patterns of migration.

In the case of teachers’ perspectives, the different and acceptable ways to manage classrooms have encouraged teachers to take a more proactive management role in order to make the newly demanding curriculum succeed. The value of accepting differences has allowed the role of the teacher to evolve as a direct result of the new curriculum standards. More technological advances in South Africa will offer distance learning, for teachers to learn new concepts and skills to implement in their classrooms. Distance learning would enable teachers to receive updated curriculum changes, and steps on how to implement the changes, in a timelier manner without traveling. A new way of delivering training to teachers may change the perspectives on ubuntu and the way teachers deliver key concepts. The way ubuntu is integrated in order to be used with new technologies is crucial for the future of the educational system. Furthermore, the use of technology in order to propagate ubuntu in young minds will mark the success on whether or not ubuntu continues to live
through the generations of South Africans. For example, if ubuntu values are merged with social media which students are more drawn to, then ubuntu would be considered part of pop culture and therefore be part of the lives of a new generation of students. Ubuntu must evolve in order to remain current and impactful.

The most recent ubuntu-inspired project, in 2011, has been the creation of training materials for students, parents, and teachers to use for combating bullying in schools. The manual is available on the Quaker Peace Centre’s website. Bullying has recently become a widespread issue in schools around the world. The training manual called ‘My Bully My Bra” informs and educates all parties involved about the dangers and how to stop this kind of violence. The manual states that if bullying occurs, everyone is involved and because of this everyone must act to stop it.

Also from the Quaker Peace Centre, Peace Buddies in Action, is the newest initiative for keeping classrooms violence-free: “The adult world of looming unemployment, and increasing competition for food and resources, can lead to lawlessness and anarchy as many young people see no hope in the future.”10 The manual has been designed keeping in mind the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). This will help teachers incorporate some of the sample exercises in the classroom without disturbing or complicating their lessons in an already demanding and rigorous curriculum. The manual includes a section on practical ways for teachers to examine stereotypes. The section states: “We need to recoup some of the optimism that we felt in 1994. Africa has only one language which has the words Ubuntu – caring for others. Umntu ngantu ngabantu which means I am myself through other people.”11
The word “ubuntu” is used two times in the entire manual. The first time it was used as a reminder of the tradition and to encourage its use as in the 1990s. The second time ubuntu is mentioned when suggesting an exercise which includes the use of the Internet for its completion. In the exercise for this section, the manual suggests that students can discuss the meaning of ubuntu with others, or the students may ask about it at home or read about it on the Internet. This manual represents the continuous use of ubuntu in peace education initiatives in South Africa. This is a new take on the way ubuntu is being promoted. The more ubuntu is associated with technology, the more students will feel engaged and excited about integrating it into their daily lives.

**Conclusion**

Teacher and student knowledge of ubuntu is apparent as shown in the case studies presented. In this chapter, one can observe that the support for ubuntu use in classrooms by teachers is crucial for an evolving understanding and appreciation of ubuntu concepts. The reassurance that children both in urban and rural settings are aware of an accurate meaning of ubuntu and knowledge of its values is imperative for ubuntu’s future use and applicability to address issues throughout South African’s lives. Once more, ubuntu’s values and spirit are strong.
CHAPTER 4

UBUNTU TODAY

This chapter will present an evaluation of ubuntu’s applicability in South Africa’s contemporary society. The work of a Dutch anthropologist, Wim Van Binsbergen will introduce this section in order to frame what like minded critics and scholars believe about ubuntu and the belief of its possible disappearance from the South African community. Although Binsbergen presents the idea of a possible end to the use of ubuntu, there are many other studies which demonstrate the contrary. Moreover, South Africa has relied on the teachings of Ubuntu when social strife or unrest creeps into their communities. Some modern world implications for the continued existence and use of ubuntu will be presented as well as a case study on the opportunity to use ubuntu in educational assessment. The most recent ubuntu-inspired work will be described by presenting information on the recently-opened Ubuntu Education Center and by revisiting the Quaker Peace Center on a Peace Buddies in Action manual for the promotion of non-violent schools titled “Peace Buddies in Action.” Ubuntu, although not an object you can touch, smell, or at times even hear, still resonates and has been used as a coping mechanism for South Africans, young and old.

Today’s Challenges

Although the traditional values of ubuntu have been incorporated in curriculum reform, old and modern day challenges for the South African education system continue to hinder students’ success. Inequality among formerly black schools,
inequality in education levels in rural schools, gender inequality for girls, female teachers, and mothers, a falling use of African languages, and the problem of unemployment are just a few of the challenges the South African educational system is facing today. The challenges of the educational system have evolved from the first major curriculum reform to the most recent reform. Despite the system changes, there are problems that continue to hinder students. In addition, some of the more modern problems have not yet been addressed.

Globalization and world markets have pushed countries to become competitors for opportunities to improve their economy by increasing their gross domestic product (GDP), reducing debt, and increasing jobs. South Africa is no exception to this new trend; however, the pressure of increasing the economy has had a negative effect on the type of education offered to students. As cities grow by providing more opportunities for skilled and unskilled labor, greater populations move to more urban areas of the country. The rural areas are becoming desolate and more economically challenged. In South Africa, a country that was predominantly rural, traditions were preserved and passed on to younger generations more easily. Technology and globalization have changed the way younger generations communicate and more recently their geographic location.

Societal and lifestyle changes have affected traditional systems such as the ubuntu way of life. South Africans have been able to maintain the ubuntu tradition for many years by implementing the concept during the TRC and later on by integrating it into the constitution and the educational system. However, the economic pressures and
migration are a threat to the possibility of continuing to use this system in other areas of the country.

Integration has been only by assimilation, the primarily black-majority schools are losing students and their examination and graduation levels are lower than those schools with a white-English-speaking majority. For example, students in predominantly black-schools are being taught the standard curriculum, which until recently, was not the case. The new curriculum has been created as a standard in education but may not meet the needs and skill sets required to be a productive individual in geographically disadvantaged areas. The standard curriculum may not meet the needs of students, to succeed. If a child has special learning requirements, the curriculum does not cater to their individual needs. Too challenging of a curriculum can equal failure to understand key concepts and frustration of the student, causing them to disengage and drop out of school. Crain Soudien states in his chapter on “Constituting the ‘class’: an analysis of the process of ‘integration’ in South African schools”:

…that the most critical outcome of the process of integration has been that of assimilation. While there has been a flight of children out of former black schools, there has been no movement whatsoever in the direction of black schools. It is also argued that children of colour have moved in large numbers towards the English-speaking sector of the former white school system.¹

Although South Africa sought to change its curriculum to reflect steps toward reconstruction, reconciliation and overall progress, there are aspects of the system that have not achieved progress or only an unacceptable level of it. For example, gender inequality and issues with race are still prominent in today’s educational system. “The
story of education in the new South Africa is, in these terms, essentially a story of the reconfiguration of dominance in relation to race, class, gender and language dominance.” As far as gender-dominance, women are still being excluded from elected positions as SGB representatives. Additionally, adolescent girls continue to be harassed in classrooms, and often, male teachers are the instigators of this sexism. As a result of gender inequality, female students have a low retention rate in comparison to male students. Female teachers are also affected by gender inequality in the classroom, earning less for the same position as a male staff member. Those working toward solutions of today’s challenges “argue for greater attention to process and values: the nature of parents’ participation, the ways in which women are being excluded from elections of School Governing Bodies (SGB) representatives, the interpersonal interactions in SGB meetings, the substantive nature of SGB discussions and decision-making, the impact of those decisions on the quality of schooling.” The fact that women are still suffering from this kind of injustice does not come as a surprise, especially since in the ubuntu tradition the ‘Council of Elders’ was solely comprised of male members.

Moreover, the implementation of multilingual schools in Africa has not improved. In 2001 when the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy was produced by the DoE, one of the sixteen education strategies to be implemented was “making multilingualism happen.” The Manifesto states:

Listening and hearing one another, truly, can only happen by making multilingualism happen. The imperatives for entrenching multilingualism in South African society are pedagogical as well as constitutional: research has
shown, overwhelmingly, that students acquire knowledge far more efficiently when they study in their mother tongue – especially in the early years. This strategy seeks to offer practical ways to make it work in a world it recognizes as being dominated by English.4

Two apparent problems are intertwined with multilingualism in South Africa: the danger of students losing their mother tongue and heritage, and the risk of being unprepared for the workforce if they do not learn English. Although the idea of the Manifesto has been that students are taught English and Afrikaans, and in addition a third language spoken in their community, many teachers are not qualified to teach in English. The lack of knowledge of linguistics has put some of the rural schools in a lower performance bracket. As a consequence, parents who are concerned with low-performing schools have removed their children from the inadequate learning environment. Children who are moved to higher performing schools are taught in English, but they lose the opportunity to learn their local or mother tongue.

Another reason why parents take their children out of schools where English is not taught or not emphasized is the fear that their children will not be able to get a decent job in the future. There is a perception that English speakers acquire better job opportunities. “Many African-language speakers – and other South Africans – perceive English as fostering greater socio-economic and educational opportunities and as potentially ‘unifying’ a linguistically diverse nation.”5 English is also viewed as an international language and for those who are thinking about migrating to the West, English would be a requirement for their success.
In addition, C2005 was designed to address South Africa’s workforce in a global economy by teaching and training students with an interdisciplinary and strategic curriculum. However, challenges such as a shortage of skilled laborers and a growing unemployment rate still exist. As stated by Jonathan Jansen in his analysis of outcomes-based education, “It is believed that the economy must grow at approximately 6 percent in order to create sufficient jobs to drastically reduce unemployment levels in the country, i.e. to absorb school leavers and present unemployed. South African’s economy is however growing at a rate which is around 3 percent.” In this case, it is clear that even though South Africa was and still is willing to adjust its educational system in order to meet the demands for more skilled workers, the actual number of jobs is less than the people ready to perform them. The unemployed or underemployed during the apartheid years had to also be included in the labor market counts. Along the same lines, the labor market trends from 1995 to 2002 present the following:

…While employment grew at 17 percent over the period, if all the new entrants were to have been placed into employment since 1995, employment would have needed to grow by 52 percent over the period. In other words, in order to maintain unemployment at its 1995 levels, employment should have risen by just over three times the existing rate.

In this case, where the economy is doing so poorly, not even the educational system working perfectly could resolve the issue. South Africa’s economy has been unable to fix its unemployment level. There are now plenty of educated citizens with no job opportunities. Since the economic factors are out of the control of South Africa’s educational system, perhaps it is time for a curriculum reform that will create
students who are prepared to compete with an international workforce in order to achieve better opportunities. This will require the government and the DoE to work side-by-side and practice the ubuntu way of life to rectify today’s unemployment problem. The DoE and the government have to re-design a curriculum which prepares students with marketable and transferable skills for a competitive global economy. Whether it is preparing students with the ability to produce the products which South Africa exports or by preparing them with more technical skills that are in high demand and outsourced by the Western world, a change is necessary. The South African DoE has done extensive work in trying to reform the curriculum so that future generations are successful. The educational system can also rely on NGOs’ expertise and of course, ubuntu to alleviate or reduce unprepared workers.

No Signs of Ubuntu in South African Tribes

Anthropologist Wim Van Binsbergen spent about two years of research observation in a village located in Willowvale district, Transkei. During the two years Binsbergen was amongst the Xhosa people, he heard the word ‘ubuntu’ only twice. The first time he heard the word pronounced was when a neighbor praised a man who had extended his hospitality to visitors from another village by saying ‘the day you refuse to accept visitors is the day you lose ubuntu.’ In this case the man who possessed ubuntu possessed the characteristic of being hospitable. The second time Binsbergen heard the word ‘ubuntu’ was when a migrant mine worker was welcomed into the village by hosting a beer drinking ritual. He was told by one of the villagers to be respectful of the elders because ‘a person’s ubuntu is how he relates to his brother.’
In this case the characteristic of an ubuntu-possessing individual has to do with obligations and respect to elders. Although Binsbergen heard the word ‘ubuntu’ only two times in the two years he was immersed in the village, he observed ubuntu-like actions often. In this case the abstract way of ubuntu is what resonated in the community where Binsbergen did his research. This may also be the same reason why in more recent years the word “ubuntu” is not written or said out loud, yet it is being used in other areas of South Africa and the world such as in business and sports.

Binsbergen goes on to propose a reason why it was so hard to hear the word ‘ubuntu’ in the village, but its existence provided hope to the community. “As an ethical ideal, a concept that its proponents are attempting to revitalize, through redefining and reconstructing it, the notion of ubuntu provides an agenda, a possible way out of trouble, and a vision for the future.”8 Binsbergen’s idea correlates with the impression of how ubuntu was used during the TRC, as a way to forgive and forget the numerous violations to human rights South Africans suffered during apartheid. Later on, when ubuntu was incorporated into the education system and several curriculum reforms, it became present as an option to remedy the many problems with the educational system.

Ubuntu has been used extensively in the education system and continues to be an option for improving the system as it stands today. For example, ubuntu has been integrated into the educational system to teach, encourage, and empower students to apply ubuntu values in classrooms and maintain peaceful environments. Ubuntu has also been used as a leadership model for teachers to embrace change for the
improvement of education. In addition, ubuntu lends itself to teaching the teachers, providing perspective on good citizenship influenced by their perception of the meaning of ubuntu. Ubuntu resonates in the knowledge of school-aged children in rural and urban communities, despite the lack of its use as a word. Finally, ubuntu is being used as a tool to combat modern violence in schools such as bullying.

The aforementioned ways in which ubuntu is being used are not the only ways in which ubuntu can remain impactful. The ways in which South Africans have reinvigorated the concept of ubuntu several times and re-integrated the ideal into the community has been incredible and at times unbelievable to critics, especially those who do not appreciate the high value that South Africans have bestowed upon ubuntu. It is very clear that the living tradition of ubuntu comforts South Africans. This comfort could possibly be a reason why it has been fairly easy to incorporate ubuntu into the education system throughout the years and still render a successful outcome.

Ubuntu Education Fund

Another more recent ubuntu-inspired organization that has opened its doors to assisting with education and health initiatives in South Africa is the Ubuntu Education Fund. This is a grassroots organization which was started 1999, opening a huge multi-purpose center in 2012, that provides health and educational support to orphaned and vulnerable children in Port Elizabeth. The Ubuntu Education Fund developed a model for raising children which allows youngsters to attend the center were they receive attention from medical, health, and educational specialists.
The Ubuntu Education Fund is the product of community-based development executed by a group of community members. Over the past 13 years the center has grown, expanding within a community of 400,000 people from a seven-kilometer perimeter. The center has helped 2,000 children get out of poverty and supports currently 132 students with university scholarships.

The Ubuntu Education Fund runs the center with ubuntu-inspired traditional values. For example, the center has become a place where community members help raise children who don’t have parents of their own. This is a cultural practice used mostly in villages, where adults treat all young children as their own offspring. However, in this center it is a normal practice despite the location in a moderately urban city.

The Ubuntu Education Fund partnered with McKinsey & Company in order to measure the impact the center is having on South African youth in the areas of health care, education, and income. The Ubuntu Education Fund website states that community members who attend the center are more likely to seek, use, and adhere to TB and HIV Treatment. Overall 72 percent of students in Grade 12 who attend the center graduate, however, only 37 percent of students who attend community schools graduate from Grade 12. The Ubuntu Education Fund invests in prenatal care, reproductive health services, early childhood development, dental and eye exams, HIV treatment, after-school programs, household support, scholarship programs, career guidance, and job preparation skills. For every dollar that the Ubuntu Education Fund invests in a child, $8.70 is returned per child, leaving a net gain to society of $2.20.
The success of this center exemplifies the power of grassroots groups coupled with ubuntu values - moving South African society forward.

**Ubuntu Tradition in a Modern World**

There is a clear contrast between Binsbergen’s experience and the opening of the new Ubuntu Education Fund Center. On the one hand an anthropologist’s study determined that ubuntu is no longer clearly present in the village and extended family setting in South Africa. On the other hand, studies support that ubuntu, although not mentioned as often as in the early 1990s, is still present in the lives of South Africans with potential to stay. Perhaps the use of the word ‘ubuntu’ has dissipated over the years, but its spirit is still alive in the majority of South Africans. As long as the ubuntu values are in the minds of teachers, there is potential for ubuntu to be integrated and re-integrated into areas in the educational system that are evolving and need improvement.

Social media has become another way for students to communicate with peers. Although social media and technologies like it can be used for encouraging the use of ubuntu, there are other aspects that can limit the use of ubuntu. Other aspects which could possibly dilute the use of the word ‘ubuntu’ amongst future generations include migration and a vastly growing generational gap. Since ubuntu is associated with village and extended family lifestyles, its meaning could be lost as generations move into urban areas and away from extended family. However, new technology to communicate across distances can play an important role in the connection between younger family members who have moved to cities and grandparents who remain in
villages. The use of new technologies to community across distances and generations will diminish the impact and loss of community life that could affect the ubuntu tradition in future generations.

Another threat to the ubuntu tradition could be the way younger generations communicate among themselves. Younger generations are using text messaging and social media to communicate. Since ubuntu is not a strong part of the pop-culture, the increased use of technology to communicate will cause oral transmission of ubuntu to fade away. Along the same lines, a generational and geographical gap between elders and youngsters could be the basis for ubuntu to lose its value amongst South Africans. By associating pop culture as an attribute of ubuntu, a way to bring back its use will evolve and with it, a way to use it to continue to resolve and mend modern day problems.

**Ubuntu Opportunity for Education Assessment**

Ubuntu has not been able to resolve everything, but there seems to be a pattern especially in the use of ubuntu in the education system. For example, the use of ubuntu has remained a focal point in several areas of the curriculum transformation. In previous chapters, case studies were presented to show how the use of ubuntu was re-integrated into the educational system and community in order to aid with implementing new changes successfully.

One thing that has remained unchanged since its inception in the new curriculum is the efficiency of educational assessment. Three main problems have been identified with the way continuous assessment (CASS) is being used among
teachers. Post-apartheid education policy transformed the educational system and made it fairer so that all students received an equal education, not determined by the color of their skin. Since the curriculum changed, so did the way assessment was performed, as noted:

Driven by a growing acceptance of, and compliance with, socio-constructivist teaching and learning approaches, the role of assessment changed from being dominated by mainly examinations/tests at the end of school terms to an assessment regime in which greater variety of more ‘authentic’ assessment activities are prescribed on a continuous basis.9

However, teachers were basing their student’s growth on grades instead of learning. Instead of using CASS formatively, teachers were using it in a summative way in order to produce higher final grades and get a higher ranking as a class and as a school. For example, teachers were limiting their lessons to content that would appear on the standard exams and not including anything that would enhance or add value to students’ level of knowledge. In other words they were ‘teaching to the test.’

More responsibility had been transferred to teachers; therefore the number of students who passed on to the next academic level was also determined ultimately by the teacher. With fear of the students’ successes and failures reflecting negatively on them, teachers were implementing CASS in a way that benefitted their evaluations. During previous years, teachers had been encouraged to take a leadership role in the classroom. This was very different from the apartheid system when teachers had to adhere strictly to top-down instructions. “The situation indicates that, despite the claim of learner-centeredness in terms of the required outcomes-based teaching approach, the pendulum under the current educational dispensation has swung to teacher
accountability and performativity, with greater managerialism in the education system.”10 Despite the good intentions of the DoE to improve the education system, the level of standardized testing as transferred pressure from student to teacher.

Recently teachers have identified confusion with two components of CASS. One is the way they should assess student progress based on the National Protocol for Assessment’s narrow definition of pedagogy and the other is there are no clear directions on how assessment adds any value to teaching. The National Protocol for Assessment’s definition of 2006 references pedagogy narrowly. It states that “classroom assessment should be both informal and formal. In both cases regular feedback should be provided to learners to enhance the learning experience.”11 Since there are no clear and substantive directions on how assessment becomes part of a productive pedagogy, teachers have found it difficult to understand how assessment can fulfill purposes other than producing grades that promote students to the new grade level or retain students in the same level.

In addition, an ever-present problem is that many teachers were educated before the curriculum reform. Although many teachers were educated before the curriculum reform, most if not all of them know what ubuntu is. Teachers’ knowledge of ubuntu will facilitate the application of its principles in order to fix the newest challenge in the educational system. The “caring for the other” value and principle of ubuntu is what will encourage teachers to follow the CASS system, but also do it in a moral and ethical way thinking about the students and not only their professional implications. The integration of ubuntu into the assessment system will encourage teachers to
enhance the way they teach. The humanness of ubuntu will encourage teachers to impart and assess learning while keeping the students as their primary focus. In addition, ubuntu can aid in this endeavor, however, a culture change amongst teachers must occur in order to creatively use ubuntu for yet another transformation in the education system.

Ubuntu was once used to empower students in classrooms, later on to empower teachers and encourage them to take on a leadership role in the classroom. Now, with another curriculum and educational challenge, ubuntu will be used to maintain a moral system of assessing students’ progress. “We argue that ubuntu opens up possibilities for more nuanced understandings of assessment theory and practice and more importantly, to enable the transformations of assessment so that it more reflects African culture.”

What now for ubuntu?

Ubuntu is being used today to drive business to South Africa. Ubuntu has become a marketing tool to attract business investment as well as promote the concept of “ubuntu capitalism,” as presented by David McDonald in his article “Ubuntu Bashing: The marketization of ‘African Values’ in South Africa.” The South African corporate world is being transformed by including the ubuntu philosophy in their mission and visions. Although the word “ubuntu” is not included in a companies mission statements, words and phrases such as “interdependent,” “communal,” “co-existence,” “belief in fairness of all human beings,” and “inclination towards consensus
rather than dissension,” are incorporated, all clear signs of the Ubuntu concept put into action.

Another way McDonald mentions South Africa is marketing ubuntu in order to drive business to South Africa by promoting the use of ubuntu as, “African wisdom with Western business.” The fusion of African wisdom with Western business provides South Africa and the West with the best of two worlds: the efficiency of Western businesses and the humanity of ubuntu. Ubuntu is also being used as a “moral regeneration and a national branding” tool. In 1998, Nelson Mandela hosted a ‘Moral Summit’ which encouraged the organization of the Moral Regeneration Movement to enhance market opportunities and allow South Africa to compete in a global market. South Africa has the opportunity to offer the West the chance to value ubuntu and by doing this, the South African youth will be able to compete in a global market with people who know the ubuntu way. Ubuntu offers the West an opportunity for work-life balance and less competition.

Ubuntu has also been mentioned during the welcoming remarks at the World Cup 2010 workshops in Cape Town in October by former president Thabo Mbeki:

Every day as, Africans, we speak of the need to respect the dignity of all human beings and embrace the universal values of ubuntu of compassion and human solidarity….I am privileged to have the opportunity today to communicate this same important message of FIFA and its official partners, sponsors and licensees of the importance to us of the message you have brought to us that we will all win in Africa, with Africa.13

Despite South Africa’s well-designed and functioning curriculum, the educational system is still not perfect. South Africa’s economic and social problems
have not been “fixed” by using ubuntu. Although the use of ubuntu has inspired South Africa and has made its success an example for the rest of the world to follow, it is not a philosophy, way of life, or tool that solves it all.

Ubuntu has also been included in South Africa’s public policy. The government is attempting “to instill ubuntu principles” in the way the government is run. “Ubuntu concepts have also been used to advocate for assistance for people with physical and mental disabilities.”¹⁴ A recently established Ubuntu Education Centre is set to inspire South Africa to think of creative ways to use ubuntu to rectify modern day problems. One of the social problems which South Africa is tackling is the raising of children who are HIV/Aids positive. The Ubuntu Education Centre and centers like this aid in solving present day social issues as well as make the young generations aware of the meaning of ubuntu.

Since the re-establishment of ubuntu into the constitution and the DoE, ubuntu has been brought back several times to attempt to “fix” problems in South Africa. However, the vulnerability of ubuntu in front of larger social problems has demonstrated to South Africa and the rest of the world that ubuntu alone cannot solve everything but ubuntu can provide a balance that gives hope and comfort. Ubuntu’s applicability in areas including education, business, and sports and its success depends on the creativity by which it gets promoted and integrated in the modern world. The pattern of discovering a problem and adapting ubuntu in order to mend the problem is fading away in the modern world.
The same way all eyes were on South Africa at the end of apartheid, once again South Africa is an international focus. This time the world wonders if ubuntu can save South Africa, addressing bigger social and economic problems. Ubuntu has recently been used to combat bullying with some success rate; however this might not be the case with social and economic problems in South Africa today. The realization that ubuntu cannot be used now when South Africa really needs it is causing disappointment to South Africans and to an extent, the rest of the world.

The way of life that once inspired a nation to reach reconciliation and become an example to follow, has not lost momentum. South Africa has started to market and export the idea of ubuntu in order to keep some of the world’s admiration intact.

There seems to be a constant need for South Africa to continue to reassure the world that everything is going to be alright. The faith and hope that South Africa once inspired by using ubuntu to reach reconciliation is now not as strong as it used to be. The Western world had South Africa on an ideological pedestal which has now crumbled, and in order for South Africans to return to that state, they must be creative with the way they use and market ubuntu to the world. An ubuntu renaissance which includes the integration of ubuntu and technology is the tool South Africa needs to continue to gain international admiration.

If the educational system is producing students who embrace and practice ubuntu, one wonders whether or not South Africa is hindering students’ abilities to deal with non-ubuntu knowledgeable citizens who happen to be part of a Western world, a world which most South Africans want to be part of.
Conclusion

After the end of apartheid ubuntu offered hope and faith that South Africa would fix a South African problem by using a traditional system. Soon after, ubuntu was used to transform public education in order to make the system fair for all students and later to make the educational organization work in a more efficient way. Today, although South Africans run the risk of losing the value of ubuntu and its further applicability in the education system and in the country, for now ubuntu retains its relevance and potential. South Africans’ need for tradition as an inspiration to move forward in the modern world and its integration with technology is what continues to keep the spirit of ubuntu alive. The integration of ubuntu and technology will provide more potential uses for ubuntu in classrooms and addressing other modern day problems. An association of ubuntu as modern can only aid younger generations with creative ways to further develop South Africa and its ability to compete economically in a world market.

In conclusion, South Africa must decide whether or not it is a good idea to globalize ubuntu. If ubuntu is globalized, young South Africans will have more opportunities to compete in a market with professionals that have been exposed to the teachings of ubuntu. However, this same market led by a Western world lacks the balance and stability that ubuntu provides. Therefore, the continued use of ubuntu in the South African educational system will create young professionals with a competitive advantage. This competitive advantage, gained through exposure to
Ubuntu could become the highest value in order to succeed in the world market and the modern world, or runs the risk of becoming so common that it loses its precious value.
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