Africanising Distributed Leadership in Environmental Education Curriculum Management

Nonkanyiso Pamella Shabalala and Mishack Thiza Gumbo, University of South Africa

Abstract

Distributed leadership (DL) is a collaborative leadership approach that involves sharing decision-making and responsibilities among multiple individuals or groups within an organisation or institution. In the context of environmental education (EE) curriculum management, DL holds significant relevance and can bring several benefits to stakeholders. This article critically examines the concept of DL in EE curriculum management and argues for an Africanised approach. It is focused on but not limited to institutions of learning. Managing EE curricula shows minimal consideration of Africanised DL. Drawing on an African philosophy of ubuntu, the article argues that an Africanised approach to DL can better serve the needs of African communities and promote sustainability in the region. As a conceptual article, we explore relevant literature to advance the idea of DL from an African perspective. In an era of environmental crisis and degradation in South Africa and other parts of the continent, an Africanised DL on EE curriculum management has the potential to offer relevant solutions. The article concludes by reflecting on the Africanisation of DL and making recommendations for implementing an Africanised approach to DL in EE curriculum management.

Keywords: *Africanised distributed leadership, distributed leadership, environmental education, environmental education curriculum management, ubuntu*

Introduction and background

Environmental education (EE) is an essential component of modern educational systems as it equips learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the environmental challenges that our planet faces today. Distributed leadership (DL), which involves the sharing of leadership responsibilities across various stakeholders, is an effective approach to managing the EE curriculum (Harris, 2008; Shabalala, 2023). The critical role of educational leadership in Africa and globally is underscored by its profound impact on the overall success and effectiveness of educational institutions (Msila, 2014). In recent years, the concept of DL has gained prominence in educational management due to its distinctive features (Shava & Tlou, 2018). DL is characterised by a collaborative and decentralised approach to leadership, emphasising shared decision-making and responsibility among various stakeholders within an educational institution (Naicker & Mestry, 2011).

Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership models, DL fosters a more inclusive and participatory environment (Galdames-Calderón, 2023). This approach has been associated with improved learning outcomes, as it leverages the collective expertise and contributions of individuals throughout the organisation (Shava & Tlou, 2018). In this light, DL offers a departure from the conventional top-down leadership style by promoting a more adaptive and responsive organisational structure that is better suited to the dynamic challenges in modern education. However, this leadership model lacks African perspectives to make it more suitable for unique cultural and societal contexts. In African cultures, leadership often embodies communal values, where decision-making is collaborative and involves various community members. Leadership can be viewed not solely as an individual endeavour but as a collective responsibility. Moreover, patriarchal structures have historically played a role in shaping leadership dynamics within African societies, influencing power distribution and decision-making processes.

To address these cultural differences, we propose an Africanised approach to DL that integrates these communal and patriarchal elements, not disregarding the critical role of the aunts that defy gender disparities, thus making the Africanised DL a fit within the transformational agenda. This adaptation seeks to align DL with the rich tapestry of African cultural values and societal structures, ensuring that the leadership model resonates with the diverse contexts in Africa. By incorporating African perspectives, DL can be more responsive to the cultural intricacies that shape leadership dynamics in the region. Such perspectives can also transform the corpus of literature on DL that is mainly oriented to Western contexts where cultural, social and environmental contexts are vastly different from those in Africa. For instance, studies by Harris (2013), Botha and Triegaardt (2014), Botha (2016), Northouse (2016), and Szeto and Cheng (2017) followed a Westernised approach to DL, even though some were conducted in South Africa. Moreover, these studies primarily focused on leadership dynamics within educational institutions but did not specifically address EE curriculum management. This approach often neglects the unique cultural, social, and contextual factors present in African settings. This observation is particularly pertinent in the realm of environmental issues and risks. Western-centric DL literature often focuses on environmental challenges and solutions within the context of Western societies, overlooking the unique dynamics present in African environments. When applied in an African context, a Westernised DL model may not adequately account for cultural differences, socio-economic factors and environmental dynamics.

The findings from the above studies vary. While some indicate positive outcomes from the implementation of DL, others highlight challenges in the adaptation of Westernised DL models to the South African context. Factors such as cultural differences, the need for a more contextually grounded leadership model, and considerations specific to the South African educational landscape were identified as influencing the effectiveness of DL. It is important to note that these studies did not specifically explore DL in the context of EE curriculum management. This has led to a gap in the literature regarding the application of DL in an African context. The identification of this gap is rooted in our comprehensive review

of existing studies. Our analysis revealed that these studies, while contributing valuable insights, predominantly followed a Westernised approach to DL, and the findings may not be fully transferable to the unique cultural, social, and environmental contexts of African nations. Our current work builds upon this foundation by examining the application of DL principles specifically within the realm of EE curriculum management in South Africa. We aim to contribute insights into the challenges and opportunities unique to this domain, considering both the successes and limitations observed in the broader studies cited.

In the African context, environmental issues are intricately tied to cultural and socio-economic factors, and the approach to addressing these challenges requires a deep understanding of local perspectives. For instance, the issues of poverty, pollution, climate change, etc are some of the challenges facing societies in Africa. Therefore, our work aims to bridge this gap by contextualising DL within the African environmental landscape, considering the distinctive challenges and opportunities present in the region.

Additionally, the lack of studies specifically investigating DL in the context of EE curriculum management in Africa became evident during our literature review. The few existing studies on DL in educational settings in Africa often did not cover the specific challenges and opportunities posed by the environmental and cultural diversity of the continent. Therefore, the identified gap arises from a synthesis of findings that collectively underscore the need for research that directly explores the application of DL principles within the context of African educational systems, particularly in the context of EE curriculum management. Our current work seeks to address this gap by providing a focused examination of DL in the African context, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of its potential impact and challenges in this unique setting. Thus, this article critically examines the concept of DL in EE curriculum management and argues for an Africanised approach. The focus is on but not limited to the learning institutions. Equally, leadership is not limited to educators and heads of institutions.

Louw (2010) describes Africanisation as a renewed focus on Africa – reclaiming what has been taken from Africa – and the emergence of a new sense of pride. In the context of this article, Africanisation refers to a deliberate effort to infuse African cultural perspectives, values, and indigenous knowledge into the framework of EE curriculum management and its leadership. What has been taken, in this context, pertains to the historical underrepresentation and marginalisation of African perspectives in the design and implementation of EE curriculum management. Traditional Westernised approaches may not fully capture the rich diversity of African environmental knowledge and practices. This gap in representation has implications for effective leadership in EE curriculum management, as it may not resonate with the cultural variations and environmental challenges unique to Africa. Africanisation, as advocated in this article, involves reclaiming and integrating indigenous African knowledge systems into EE curriculum management, fostering a renewed sense of pride in local environmental practices. By doing so, we aim to contribute to a more culturally responsive and contextually grounded leadership approach that aligns with the distinctive needs of African educational settings.

Sankofa Youth Movement (n.d) defines Africanisation as embracing African people's heritage and developing a sense of loyalty towards the Motherland – Africa. In the context of EE curriculum management processes, Africanisation signifies a transformative approach to curriculum design, implementation, and leadership that is grounded in African cultural values, knowledge systems, and environmental practices. Specifically, the integration of Africanisation into EE curriculum management involves the inclusion of African perspectives, indigenous knowledge, and cultural elements within the EE curriculum content to reflect the diverse environmental practices and values of African communities; adoption of teaching and learning methods that align with African learning styles, which incorporate storytelling, experiential learning, and community-based approaches to engage learners in environmental education; and fostering a leadership approach that recognises and values African cultural heritage, promotes inclusivity and acknowledges the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes related to EE curriculum management.

We relate Africanisation to a multifaceted movement with social, political, and cultural dimensions, all aimed at promoting African identity, values, and interests in the environment. In the social context, Africanisation involves a collective effort by individuals and communities to reclaim and celebrate their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of unity and pride. This aspect emphasises community engagement, grassroots initiatives, and social mobilisation to integrate African perspectives into various aspects of life, including environmental consciousness. From a political standpoint, Africanisation signifies advocacy for policies and strategies that recognise and prioritise African values in environmental decision-making. This dimension involves engaging with governmental bodies, policymakers, and institutions to influence legislation and governance structures that reflect and respect the unique environmental perspectives of African communities. In the cultural sphere, Africanisation manifests as a revival and promotion of traditional knowledge systems, rituals, and practices related to the environment. It seeks to embed cultural values into EE and management, ensuring that these practices are considered and respected in the broader discourse on sustainability and conservation. Collectively, these dimensions constitute a dynamic movement that seeks to bridge the gap between global environmental ideals and the diverse, culturally rich context of Africa. By incorporating social, political, and cultural elements into the discourse on Africanisation, we aim to contribute to a more holistic understanding of its implications for promoting African identity, values, and interests in the environmental domain.

The call for community involvement and participation in EE programmes is rooted in the broader context of Africanisation, emphasising the social, cultural, and political dimensions. It represents a tangible step towards promoting sustainable development outcomes by integrating African perspectives into environmental education and decision-making processes. Community involvement and participation ensure that EE programmes are culturally appropriate, relevant, and sustainable in the long run. A study by Zikargae et al. (2022) in Ethiopia focussed on empowering rural society through non-formal EE and

showed that the skills and knowledge imparted through EE were important for implementing community projects, helping to improve community participation in raising environmental quality, thus improving environmental performance, farming methods, and livelihood situations.

In this article, an African community refers to a group of people living in Africa, who share common cultural, social, and environmental contexts. Though African communities are diverse and unique (Idang, 2015), there are common lifestyles, practices, knowledge and skills that are framed in 'ubuntu'. Ubuntu, in the sense of DL and EE, addresses the need for people to work together in addressing environmental issues for the benefit of all. While both ubuntu and DL emphasise collaboration and collective action, they differ in their underlying principles and application. Ubuntu is a philosophical and ethical concept rooted in African communalism. It emphasises interconnectedness, shared humanity, and the well-being of the community. In the context of addressing environmental issues, ubuntu calls for a sense of collective responsibility, where individuals work together harmoniously to address environmental challenges. The focus is on the shared benefits and interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment. DL, on the other hand, is a leadership model that distributes leadership responsibilities and decision-making throughout an organisation or community. It involves the empowerment of individuals at various levels to contribute to leadership functions. In the context of EE, DL may manifest as collaborative decision-making among teachers, learners, and community members in designing and implementing EE programmes. While ubuntu underscores the communal and ethical dimensions of working together for the greater good, DL focuses on the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities within a structured framework. In the context of addressing environmental issues, both concepts advocate for collaboration, but ubuntu is more rooted in ethical principles, while DL is a specific leadership model that can be applied within various frameworks.

Leadership in African communities is guided by a communal lifestyle and approach toward activities that are enshrined in ubuntu (Murove, 2019). We found the Tswana proverb, *kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa* (work is easier when people work together) which highlights an element of DL, suitable to frame this study. This is premised on the fact that community involvement, support and participation are essential for the success of EE programmes (Kinyata & Abiodun, 2020). We believe that DL is well expressed through this proverb. EE curriculum management that aims to promote sustainable development must suit the cultural and societal contexts of the local community. It must consider the unique characteristics of the community concerned to provide relevant solutions (Chinyamurindi, 2019). DL, also known as shared leadership – *tshwaraganelwa* (work together) – refers to a leadership approach that involves multiple individuals sharing leadership responsibilities and decision-making processes.

We argue that DL can be Africanised to take the form of an ubuntu-based *letsema* (social corporate) that gels well with *kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa*. In this context, ubuntu introduces unique values and principles that serve as a significant value that adds

to the conceptualisation and enactment of DL in the African context. The value that ubuntu brings to the conceptualisation and enactment of DL lies in its ability to infuse communal ethos, ethical foundations, and a holistic approach. Ubuntu, rooted in a communal ethos, emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of collective well-being. By integrating ubuntu into DL, the leadership model becomes infused with a sense of shared responsibility and collaboration, aligning more closely with the African cultural and social fabric. In addition, ubuntu places a strong emphasis on ethical considerations, moral values, and the inherent dignity of individuals. Infusing DL within ubuntu values adds an ethical foundation to leadership practices, promoting fairness, inclusivity, and a genuine concern for the welfare of the community and lastly, Ubuntu encourages a holistic approach to problem-solving, considering the broader impact on the community and the environment. This holistic perspective aligns with the sustainable and interconnected view of leadership required in addressing environmental issues, complementing the objectives of *Kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa*. This, we argue, enhances the adaptability and effectiveness of DL within the African context, particularly in the realm of environmental leadership. The ubuntu philosophy believes in group solidarity, which is central to the survival of African communities (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). It is associated with DL because DL promotes distribution of roles which is an element of solidarity to achieve a specific objective.

The Africanisation of DL in EE curriculum management is essential for promoting contextually relevant education that responds to the unique needs of African communities. This idea supports UNESCO's (2015) emphasis on the need for education to be culturally relevant and sensitive to local contexts. EE is not simply about transferring knowledge; it also involves shaping attitudes and values toward the environment, which can have a significant impact on sustainable development outcomes (Tidball & Krasny, 2010). Africanising DL has the potential of infusing the leadership model with African cultural values, communal ethos, and collaborative principles. DL, in essence, is characterised by the distribution of leadership responsibilities and decision-making throughout an organisation or community. In the context of EE, Africanising DL adds value in several key ways such as through cultural alignment, respect for indigenous knowledge and community collaboration. While participatory community-based action research may already embody certain principles of Africanised DL, explicitly incorporating African cultural values into DL frameworks ensures a more intentional and focused effort to align leadership practices with the unique context of African communities. This will ensure that the values and practices that are developed are consistent with local cultural norms and practices to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability (Jones et al., 2019).

Therefore, there is a need to study the Africanisation of DL for EE curriculum management. This study draws on relevant literature and case studies to explore how DL can be adapted to suit the cultural and societal contexts of African communities while still maintaining its effectiveness in promoting sustainable EE. Therefore, there is a need to

review literature on EE curriculum management, Western models of distributed leadership, African philosophy, and community and Africanising DL for EE curriculum management.

EE in a secondary school context

EE plays a pivotal role in shaping the mindset, knowledge, and behaviours of learners towards environmental issues and sustainability (Boca & Saraçlı, 2019; Mashaba et al., 2022; Fang et al., 2023). By integrating EE into the curriculum, educational institutions have the unique opportunity to equip learners with the necessary skills and values to become active stewards of the environment (Potter, 2009). Carr and Plevyak (2020) emphasised that EE in schools catalyses developing ecological literacy, promoting a deep understanding of the interconnections between humans and their environment. We opine that EE goes beyond traditional subject matter by providing learners with the knowledge and tools to analyse complex environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. By engaging learners in real-world problem-solving and critical thinking, EE can cultivate a sense of responsibility and agency, empowering them to act for a more sustainable future (Singh-Pillay, 2023).

To maximise the impact of EE, its integration into the school curriculum is crucial. Hence, EE was integrated into all school subjects (Damoah & Adu, 2019) in South Africa to offer an interdisciplinary approach which is supported by the White Paper on Education and Training (1995). The approach enhances learners' understanding of environmental concepts (Hoang, 2021). Incorporating environmental themes into diverse academic subjects helps learners grasp the complexities of environmental issues from multiple perspectives (Buckingham & Turner, 2008). This integration also facilitates critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to appreciate the interdependence of environmental factors (Winther et al., 2010).

Environmental issues are intricately connected with social and economic aspects of society. Through an interdisciplinary approach, learners can recognise how environmental degradation impacts human societies and economic systems (Ardoin et al., 2020). Research has shown that understanding these connections fosters a sense of responsibility towards sustainable practices and encourages active participation in environmental conservation (Wang et al., 2020). By studying the social and economic implications of environmental issues, learners can become better advocates for positive change in their communities (Winther et al., 2010).

In secondary schools, however, learners mostly learn within classrooms (Shabalala, 2019); teachers and school administrators encounter challenges when integrating outdoor education in schools (Patchen et al., 2022). Challenges include limited opportunities presented to teachers to take learners outside; logistical issues such transportation, safety concerns, and supervision; curriculum and standardised testing, etc. Indoor learning denies learners their actual interaction with the environment and experiential learning which is a critical teaching strategy in indigenous communities considering that such communities live close to nature – nature is their 'motherland'. Experiential learning can play a vital role in deepening learners' connection with nature and strengthening their engagement in EE.

Field trips to natural habitats, outdoor activities, and hands-on projects provide learners with direct experiences of the environment, which enhances their emotional and cognitive connection to nature (Whitburn et al., 2023). Such immersive experiences have been shown to improve learners' attitudes towards environmental issues and boost their motivation to participate in environmental conservation initiatives (Fang et al., 2022). However, once-off trips may not be effective. Regular outdoor teaching, even on a school campus, can fulfil experiential learning.

EE curriculum management

EE curriculum management refers to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational programmes aimed at promoting environmental awareness, knowledge, and skills (UNESCO, 1994). It involves the development of curricular materials, selection of appropriate teaching methods, assessment of learners' learning, and continuous improvement of the programme over time. One of the key challenges teachers face in EE curriculum management, however, is the need to address the interdisciplinary nature of environmental issues. As noted by Winther et al. (2010), environmental problems require an understanding of scientific concepts and an appreciation of social, economic, and political factors. Therefore, EE programmes must incorporate a variety of disciplinary perspectives to provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of environmental issues.

Another challenge for teachers in EE curriculum management is the need to align curriculum goals and objectives with educational standards. This challenge primarily pertains to aligning with education standards, which encompass overarching guidelines set by national educational authorities. These standards may include general educational goals, competencies, and outcomes that cut across various subjects and disciplines. Additionally, subject-specific learning outcomes within the broader framework of national education standards pose a specific challenge. Teachers must navigate the intricacies of aligning EE curriculum goals with subject-specific objectives related to EE. This involves considering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners are expected to develop in the context of EE within the broader subject-specific curriculum. Therefore, the challenge extends beyond aligning solely with subject learning outcomes to encompass a broader alignment with national education standards. Navigating both layers of standards is essential for ensuring that EE curriculum objectives not only meet the specific goals of EE but also align with the broader educational framework set by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This requires careful consideration of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners should develop through the programme, and the most appropriate methods for assessing their achievement.

Effective EE curriculum management, as discussed, involves ongoing evaluation of the programme to identify strengths and weaknesses and make improvements over time. This statement primarily refers to EE programmes that are integrated into the formal school curriculum. The evaluation process includes assessing the effectiveness of curricular materials, teaching methods, and the overall impact of the programme on

learners' environmental awareness, knowledge, and skills. While the focus is on formal school curriculum integration, it is important to note that similar principles of ongoing evaluation can be applied to extracurricular EE programmes. In both contexts, the goal is to continuously assess and enhance the quality and impact of EE initiatives. The specific methods and criteria for evaluation may vary between formal curriculum-based programmes and extracurricular activities, but the underlying principle of ongoing improvement remains fundamental. Evaluation can take many forms, including learner assessments, surveys of programme participants, and analyses of programme outcomes. According to Gough (2016), evaluation can help to ensure that EE programmes meet their intended goals and can inform decisions about future programme development.

Overall, effective EE curriculum management requires a coordinated effort among teachers, administrators, policymakers, learners, and communities by incorporating multiple disciplinary perspectives, aligning curriculum with educational standards, and evaluating programme effectiveness. Outdoor teaching can make teachers and learners connect and partner with communities. However, Western models of DL limit this possible collaboration. While it is assumed that collaboration already exists, it is essential to consider the potential limitations or cultural differences within the existing collaboration, which may have been influenced by Western models. The call for Africanisation is rooted in the recognition that, despite existing collaboration, there may be aspects of the current approach that do not fully align with the cultural, social, and environmental contexts of African communities. Africanisation seeks to enhance collaboration by infusing African cultural values, perspectives, and community-oriented approaches into the collaborative processes of EE curriculum management. This intentional shift aims to foster a more inclusive, culturally relevant, and effective collaboration among stakeholders.

Western models of distributed leadership

Western models of DL have been developed to provide a theoretical framework for understanding how leadership can be distributed among different individuals or groups in organisations. Spillane's model (2005) outlines a Western approach to DL that is commonly enacted in organisational and educational settings. In Western contexts, DL is often enacted through a structure that disperses leadership responsibilities across various levels of an organisation (Spillane, 2005). Formal leaders such as administrators and department heads collaborate with informal leaders, including teachers or team leaders, to collectively contribute to decision-making and organisational goals. Enactment of Spillane's (2005) model involves shared decision-making processes. Formal leaders are encouraged to involve other stakeholders in decision-making, seeking input and feedback from individuals at different levels of the organisation. This shared decision-making fosters a sense of collective responsibility and a more inclusive leadership culture. Spillane's (2005) model emphasises the importance of coordination and communication among leaders at different levels to achieve organisational goals.

Gronn (2002) proposed that leadership is not solely the domain of individuals in formal leadership positions, but rather is distributed across individuals and groups in an organisation. Gronn's model emphasises the importance of leadership practices such as empowerment, collaboration, and shared decision-making (Gronn, 2002). Harris's (2008) proposal was that DL can be understood as a process of interaction among individuals and groups in an organisation. Harris's (2008) model emphasised the importance of social relationships and communication in the distribution of leadership and highlights the role of trust and shared values in effective leadership practices. Bolden's (2011) four-fold model proposed that leadership is distributed across four domains, which are individual, team, organisational, and societal. Bolden's model emphasised the importance of recognising and valuing leadership practices at each of these levels and highlighted the need for a holistic approach to leadership development. Even though the Western models of DL have proven to be successful in certain organisations, they have not escaped criticism.

There are distinct differences between the Western DL approaches and ubuntu-based DL. Gronn, Harris and Bolden's models are rooted in Western organisational and educational philosophies, emphasising concepts such as empowerment, collaboration, shared decision-making, and a holistic approach to leadership. Ubuntu-based DL is grounded in African philosophy, particularly the ubuntu philosophy, which emphasises interconnectedness, communal relationships, and a collective orientation. Ubuntu-based DL places a strong emphasis on shared humanity, empathy, and the interconnected well-being of individuals and the community. Western DL focuses on values such as trust, collaboration, and shared decision-making. These models prioritise individual empowerment and the recognition of leadership practices across different levels. Ubuntu-based DL places a significant emphasis on communal values, interdependence, and consensus-building. It values the contributions of each member in the community, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and shared leadership.

Criticism of Western models of DL and their potential implications for practice

Western models have tended to focus on the distribution of formal leadership roles and responsibilities, rather than exploring the potential for informal leadership practices (Gronn, 2002). Over the years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of informal leadership practices within DL frameworks. Leino (2022) claimed that informal leadership has received increasing attention in the last two decades. Scholars and practitioners have increasingly acknowledged the significant contributions of informal leaders, recognising that leadership is not confined to formal roles but can emerge organically at various levels of an organisation. Leino (2022) attested to the multi-level nature of informal leadership that is centred on knowledge, change-orientation, action, communication, group and influence.

It should be noted that Western models of DL may not be relevant to different cultural contexts (Dorfman et al., 2012). While these models suggest that leadership should be a collective process, collaboration and shared decision-making be encouraged and valued,

and it thrives on communication and coordination among leaders at different levels of an organisation, practitioners should be aware of their potential limitations and cultural considerations (Sergiovanni, 2015). Sergiovanni's (2015) cautionary note draws attention to potential challenges that may arise in the implementation of collective leadership models, especially in the aspects of collaboration and shared decision-making.

We believe that these Western leadership models provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding how leadership can be distributed among individuals and groups in organisations by emphasising the importance of collaborative and inclusive leadership practices. They inspire Africanisation of DL by aligning with key principles such as collective decision-making, recognition of diverse perspectives, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity. The emphasis on these aspects within the theoretical framework of DL provides a foundation for integrating African perspectives into leadership practices. Currently, the puzzle of the DL model of EE curriculum management is incomplete without its Africanisation flavour. Africanisation brings a cultural lens to the DL model, ensuring that leadership practices are not only effective but also culturally relevant within the diverse contexts of African societies. This involves incorporating cultural norms, values, and traditions that resonate with local communities, thereby enhancing the contextualisation of the DL model. Africanisation adds a strong emphasis on community involvement and participation. In the context of EE curriculum management, this means actively engaging local communities in decision-making processes, aligning educational goals with community needs, and fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration. This participatory approach enhances the effectiveness of the DL model within the African educational landscape.

Msila (2014) mentioned that African culture is at best ignored or at worst viewed as a negative obstacle to 'good' leadership. In many instances, African culture may be subject to stereotypes or biases that depict it as incompatible with conventional leadership norms. Stereotypes might include assumptions about communication styles, decision-making processes, or hierarchical structures that are inconsistent with Western-centric leadership paradigms. These biases can contribute to the marginalisation of African cultural elements in leadership discussions. Msila's (2014) observation may be linked to the historical legacy of colonialism, during which Western values and structures were imposed on African societies. The remnants of this colonial mindset can manifest in the perception that Western models of leadership are superior, while African cultural elements are deemed as hindrances to effective leadership. Exploring the colonial legacy helps contextualise the challenges African culture faces in leadership discourse. When African culture is ignored or viewed negatively in discussions on leadership, there are implications for leadership development initiatives. This may lead to a lack of representation of diverse leadership styles, limiting the opportunities for individuals to embrace and leverage their cultural strengths. This, in turn, can hinder the development of inclusive and culturally competent leaders. Its marginalisation can be attributed to the absence of consideration on alternative contexts in the current conception of DL.

It should be noted that whilst the African models do share certain qualities with the Western models of leadership and management, each is unique and is informed by context. There are some shared qualities between Western and African models. Both Western and African leadership models may share a commitment to inclusivity, albeit with different manifestations. While Western models emphasise diversity and inclusion, African leadership models often prioritise communal and collective decision-making, reflecting a shared value for involving various perspectives. The need for adaptability is a common thread. Both Western and African contexts recognise the importance of leaders being responsive to change. However, the interpretation and application of adaptability may differ, with Western models often focusing on organisational agility and African models incorporating flexibility in communal decision-making.

Even though there are similarities between Western and African models, there are differences as well. African leadership models, informed by ubuntu philosophy, emphasise interconnectedness, collective well-being, and shared humanity. This differs from Western individualism, highlighting a unique approach that prioritises community relationships. African models often place a strong emphasis on communal decision-making, where leaders collaborate with community members to reach consensus. This stands in contrast to certain Western models that may involve more hierarchical decision-making structures. African leadership is deeply entrenched in cultural contexts, drawing on traditional values, rituals, and customs. The influence of cultural elements, such as storytelling, symbolism, and oral traditions, distinguishes African models from their Western counterparts.

Contextual factors also distinguish the two (Western and African) models. The historical context plays a significant role. Western leadership models have evolved within a history shaped by industrialisation, capitalism and individual rights, while African models are influenced by diverse histories, including pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The structures of societies differ between Western and African contexts. Western models may navigate through more formalised and bureaucratic structures, while African models may engage with more community-centric and relational structures. Economic systems and challenges also contribute to variations. Western leadership may be influenced by market-driven economies, while African leadership often addresses complex economic challenges, such as sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and resource management. To understand this uniqueness, the African philosophy toward leadership would broaden the understanding of DL and the importance of advocating the Africanisation of DL in teaching-learning.

African philosophy of ubuntu-based community

Community is a central value in African cultures that emphasises the importance of collective responsibility and collaboration (Nwosimiri, 2021). Ubuntu, on which many African communities are premised, emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of relationships (Mbiti, 1990). This leads to an African philosophy of ubuntu which is central to many African societies and has influenced both traditional and modern

African thought (Gade, 2012; Mbigi & Maree, 1995). Ubuntu is commonly translated as "humanity towards others" or "I am because we are" (Tutu, 1999). It emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of people in a community. It advances the ideals of *kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa* and *letsema*.

The philosophy of ubuntu is deeply rooted in African traditional beliefs and values, and it has been expressed in various ways by African cultures. For instance, the Yoruba people of Nigeria have a concept of *omoluabi* which means "a person of good character", which emphasises the importance of contributing to the well-being of the community (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Similarly, the Akan people of Ghana have a concept of *nto nso* which means "sacred community", which emphasises the importance of living in harmony with others and the natural environment (Wiredu, 1996). These expressions attest to *tshwaraganela* in realising that "I am because we are" as opposed to "I am without we are".

Ubuntu has been the subject of philosophical inquiry and has been interpreted in various ways by African scholars. For instance, Metz (2007) argued that ubuntu is a moral theory that emphasises the importance of relationships between individuals and the community, a way of life that interconnects people in a community. Similarly, Ramose (1999) wrote that ubuntu is a political philosophy that emphasises the importance of collective decision-making and the well-being of the community. One of the key features of ubuntu is its emphasis on communalism and the importance of the community over the individual. This is reflected in the African proverb "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbigi & Maree, 1995, p. 23). This proverb emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and their dependence on the community for their well-being. In typical African indigenous communities, leadership is modelled through a collective decision-making model in which each has a chance to contribute (*tshwaraganela kgetsi ya tsie*). Ubuntu also emphasises the importance of empathy, compassion, and respect for others, which are necessary for building and maintaining harmonious relationships within the community (Tutu, 1999). By embracing these values, ubuntu promotes a sense of unity and collective responsibility, where individuals contribute to the greater good of the community. DL, in practice, often involves the distribution of leadership responsibilities and decision-making across multiple individuals or teams within an organisation. It recognises that leadership is not confined to a single hierarchical position but can be distributed among various stakeholders. While DL emphasises shared leadership, there may be variations in how inclusive decision-making processes are across different contexts. In some instances, the involvement of all individuals in decision-making may not be as explicitly structured as ubuntu's collective decision-making model, where each person has a chance to contribute. The explicit emphasis on empathy, compassion, and the promotion of unity and collective responsibility, as highlighted in Ubuntu, may not be explicitly outlined in all DL practices. DL might focus more on task distribution and collaboration, potentially overlooking the explicit nurturing of harmonious relationships.

Incorporating ubuntu principles into DL can enhance the inclusivity of decision-making processes. Ubuntu's emphasis on providing each individual with an opportunity

to contribute aligns with the participatory nature of DL but underscores the importance of explicit mechanisms for inclusivity. The ubuntu principles have the potential to contribute to the cultivation of empathy, compassion, and a sense of unity within DL practices. Explicitly incorporating these values can foster a more holistic approach to leadership, nurturing not only task efficiency but also the well-being and unity of the collective. Ubuntu's emphasis on collective responsibility aligns with DL's distributed nature. However, articulating the principles of ubuntu within DL can reinforce the sense of shared responsibility, emphasising that every individual's contribution is integral to the collective success of the organisation. All this can be realised if DL in EE curriculum management by considering the African model.

Community, therefore, conceptualised from the African philosophy of ubuntu, has important implications for EE curriculum management. It emphasises the interconnectedness of people and their environment, and the importance of community in promoting sustainable development (Van Norren, 2022; Metz, 2007). This interconnectedness is expressed by tied relationships between human beings, environment and spirituality. Incorporating this philosophy into EE curriculum management can help promote a holistic approach to EE that emphasises the interdependence of people and the environment, and the importance of community involvement in promoting sustainable development (Metz, 2011).

One way in which ubuntu can be incorporated into EE curriculum management is through the promotion of community-based approaches to EE. This approach emphasises the importance of involving communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of EE programmes. The community-based approaches to EE involve a collaborative effort among diverse stakeholders, including residents (community members), teachers, learners, community leaders, and external organisations. The integration of EE programmes into the school curriculum can take various forms, from subject integration to extracurricular activities, depending on the specific context and goals of the community. It recognises that communities have unique knowledge and perspectives about their environment and can play an important role in promoting sustainable development (Tilbury, 2004; Blair, 2008). The community-based approaches to EE also help build community ownership and support for EE programmes, which can lead to more sustainable outcomes (Tilbury, 2004). EE programmes should thus not be confined to schools only.

Another way in which an African philosophy of community and ubuntu can be incorporated into EE curriculum management is through promotion of values-based approaches to EE (Tosam, 2019). This approach emphasises the importance of values such as respect for nature, interdependence, and community, which are central to African philosophies of community and ubuntu (Ayayia, 2022; Chemhuru, 2019; Tosam, 2019; Velempini et al., 2018). Incorporating an African philosophy of ubuntu-based community into EE curriculum management can also help promote a more holistic and integrated approach to EE (Masoga & Shokane, 2019). This approach recognises that EE is not only about the environment, but also about people and their relationship with the environment.

It further recognises the importance of promoting sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Chimakonam, 2018).

Therefore, an African philosophy of ubuntu-based community has important implications for EE curriculum management. This leads to a need to Africanise DL.

Africanising DL

Adopting an Africanised approach to DL would prioritise collective responsibility and collaboration among stakeholders and emphasise the importance of relationships and interconnectedness. This approach would involve the delegation of responsibilities and decision-making power to multiple individuals or groups (*letsema/tshwaraganela kgetsi ya tsie*), with an emphasis on collaboration and the sharing of expertise. This would corroborate with Spillane's (2012) idea about distributing leadership responsibilities among multiple individuals rather than solely relying on the traditional hierarchy of authority. Additionally, an African approach to DL would prioritise the needs and perspectives of African communities and promote sustainability in the region. It would allow flexibility, adaptability, and collective decision-making (Gronn, 2002).

Africanising DL involves tailoring it to the unique cultural, social, and political contexts of Africa. It is based on the premise that African societies have unique leadership practices based on ubuntu, which emphasise collectivism, community, and interdependence (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). Therefore, Africanising DL involves integrating African cultural values, beliefs, and practices into DL models to make them more relevant and effective in African contexts. As mentioned in the preceding statements, in the African context, communal decision-making is a prevalent cultural value. Africanising DL for EE involves structuring decision-making processes to be more inclusive and participatory. This ensures that stakeholders at various levels, including community members, teachers and learners, have opportunities to contribute to the design and implementation of EE initiatives. Embracing the ubuntu philosophy emphasises interconnectedness, empathy, and collective responsibility. This can be integrated into DL models for EE by fostering a sense of shared purpose and emphasising the impact of environmental actions on the community. Collaborative efforts driven by a collective responsibility for the environment align with ubuntu principles. African cultures often possess rich indigenous knowledge about the environment.

Africanising DL in EE curriculum management involves recognising and incorporating this indigenous knowledge into educational practices. This can enhance the content and methods used in EE programmes, making them more culturally relevant and resonant with local communities. African cultural practices often emphasise the importance of community engagement. In the context of DL for EE, this involves actively involving local communities in the development, implementation, and evaluation of EE initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures that EE programmes align with the needs and values of the community. Some African cultures incorporate ceremonial practices related to environmental conservation. Africanising DL in EE may involve incorporating such practices into the

curriculum, fostering a deeper connection between learners and the environment through meaningful rituals.

One way to Africanise DL is by incorporating community participation in decision-making – *tshwaraganela kgetsi*. In African cultures, community decision-making is a common practice, and leaders are expected to consult with their constituents before making decisions (Mawere et al., 2021). This is where *kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa* is valued greatly. Another way to Africanise DL is by embracing collective responsibility. In African cultures, leadership is viewed as a collective responsibility, and leaders are accountable to their communities (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). Therefore, DL models in African contexts should emphasise collective responsibility and accountability rather than individual accountability. Consultation, collaboration and consultation could make the Africanised DL realisable in the EE curriculum management in a school context.

Furthermore, Africanising DL involves recognising and embracing the diversity of African cultures. Africa is a diverse continent with over 2000 languages and various cultural practices (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). Therefore, DL models in African contexts should recognise and embrace this diversity to ensure that leadership practices are inclusive and representative of all communities. However, the adaptation of DL to these African contexts should consider commonalities highlighted earlier, as well as the underlying philosophy of ubuntu. Africanising DL could enhance organisational leadership in African contexts by ensuring that leadership practices are inclusive, representative, and aligned with African cultural values and practices. Through its accommodative nature, ubuntu can enable the connection between Western models of DL and African alternatives. In learning, both indigenous and non-indigenous learners can enrich each other's cultural lenses on EE.

Implications for EE management

Africanising DL in EE management can offer a more culturally sensitive approach to leadership that recognises and values the cultural diversity of African communities. The Africanisation approach can promote greater community engagement and participation in EE initiatives, leading to more sustainable and effective environmental management practices. It can create strong partnerships between communities and schools. This means engaging local communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of EE programmes. By involving communities, programmes can be tailored to suit their unique cultural and societal contexts, ensuring that they are relevant, effective, and sustainable in the long run. Africanising DL should therefore promote collective responsibility and accountability in EE management to ensure sustainability. Leaders should view their roles as part of a broader collective effort rather than seeing themselves with individual responsibilities. In this context, leaders are school principals, head of departments, subject advisors, school governing body members and teachers. This approach aligns with the African philosophy of ubuntu, emphasising the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals in a community and partnerships which are expressed through *kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa* and *letsema*.

An Africanised approach should integrate African cultural values, beliefs, and practices into the DL model. This could involve promoting values such as respect for nature, interdependence, and community, which are central to an African philosophy of community and ubuntu. An Africanised approach should emphasise collaboration and effective communication among leaders and stakeholders. This promotes a sense of unity and cooperation in addressing environmental challenges, leading to better decision-making and outcomes.

In addition, an Africanised approach should consider the diverse cultural, social, and environmental contexts of African communities. EE curricula should be contextualised to suit the specific needs and challenges faced by different communities. Also, an Africanised approach should promote community-based approaches to EE. By involving communities in the decision-making process, EE programmes can be more relevant and effective in addressing local environmental issues. Learners should not be taught for performance and certification only but should be capacitated for sustainability and working with their communities. Performance and certification-focused education often emphasises memorisation and exam-oriented learning, while capacitating learners for sustainability involves a broader skill set. This might include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and a deep understanding of real-world issues. These skills go beyond exam performance and contribute to overall personal and professional development.

An Africanised approach should prioritise sustainability in EE management. This means promoting practices and values that ensure the well-being of current and future generations, in line with the African philosophy of ubuntu and the interconnectedness of all living beings. The practices referred to in this context are community-centred learning, ethical and social responsibility, environmental sustainability, cultural awareness and inclusivity, empathy and compassion, etc., that align with the principles of well-being, sustainability, and interconnectedness as influenced by the African philosophy of ubuntu. Furthermore, an Africanised approach should emphasise the continuous evaluation and improvement of the EE programmes. Regular assessments of programme effectiveness, stakeholder feedback, and learning outcomes can lead to better-informed decisions and more impactful programmes.

Africanising DL should encourage a holistic approach to EE management. This involves recognising the interdependence of environmental issues with social, economic, and political aspects, and integrating these perspectives into the curriculum. Finally, an Africanised approach should address specific environmental challenges faced by African communities. By focusing on contextually relevant solutions, EE can have a more meaningful impact on sustainable development in the region.

Conclusion

Africanising DL in EE management can contribute to a more inclusive and contextually relevant approach to leadership. By incorporating the principles of ubuntu, collective responsibility, and community participation, this approach emphasises the importance of collaboration and interconnectedness in addressing environmental challenges. Through community-based approaches and values-based education, EE programmes can be tailored to suit the unique needs of African communities and promote sustainable development. In institutions of learning, therefore, educators must be trained to make programmes and teaching relevant to African communities' contexts.

Africanising DL challenges traditional Western models and encourages a shift towards more culturally sensitive and community-driven leadership practices. Also, there is a room to make Africanised and Western models benefit from each other. By acknowledging and embracing the diversity and commonalities of African cultures, EE management can foster a deeper understanding of the interdependence between people and their environment.

As the African continent faces various environmental challenges, it is crucial to empower communities with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address these issues sustainably. Africanising DL can play a pivotal role in empowering African communities to become active stewards of the environment and contribute to a more sustainable future. However, Africanising DL comes with challenges. Implementing this approach requires a nuanced understanding of cultural contexts, effective communication, and collaboration among stakeholders. Overcoming the potential obstacles will require continuous evaluation, feedback, and learning from experiences to refine and improve the application of Africanised leadership in EE management.

In conclusion, embracing the philosophy of *ubuntu* and African cultural values in DL can lead to more meaningful and effective EE management in Africa. By fostering a sense of unity, collective responsibility, and appreciation for the environment, this approach has the potential to positively impact not only the present but also future generations, creating a sustainable legacy for African communities. *Kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa* can drive this kind of approach to DL. As we move forward, further research and practical applications are essential to unlock the full potential of Africanised DL and promote a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between people and the environment.

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Notes on Contributors and their Contributions

Lead author
Shabalala, Nonkanyiso Pamella
Dr Shabalala is a lecturer in Science and Technology Education at the University of South Africa, focusing on environmental education, indigenous knowledge systems, Africanisation, educational leadership, education for sustainable development.

Co-author
Gumbo, Mishack Thiza
Dr Gumbo is a research professor in the Department of Science and Technology Education at University of South Africa specialising in indigenous technology education systems, decolonisation of the curriculum, technology education, teachers' professional development and he mentors developing academics.

Percentage contribution

Areas of contribution	Author	% Contribution per area, per author (each area = 100%)
Conception or design of the paper, theory or key argument	Shabalala	60%
	Gumbo	40%
Data collection	Shabalala	60%
	Gumbo	40%
Analysis and interpretation	Shabalala	60%
	Gumbo	40%
Drafting the paper	Shabalala	70%
	Gumbo	30%
Critical review of paper	Shabalala	30%
	Gumbo	70%

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