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EXPLORING UBUNTU SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DIMENSION OF FOSTERING STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Inception report

August 2024

EXPLORING UBUNTU SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DIMENSION OF FOSTERING STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

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Authors

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About VVOB and the African Centre for School Leadership

The African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) is a coalition of partners in Africa committed to the promotion of effective school leadership by bringing together organisations that offer professional development services, research, and policy advice on effective school leadership. The ACSL coordinated by VVOB – *education for development*, the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA).

VVOB – *education for development* is an international non-profit organisation with over 40 years of experience in quality education. Through capacity development, VVOB provides support to ministries of education in Africa, Asia and South America to improve (initial) professional development of teachers and school leaders in early childhood, primary, general secondary, and technical and vocational education.

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List of abbreviations

ACSL	African Centre for School Leadership
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DDE	District Director of Education
DEO	District Education Officer
PD	Professional Development
USL	Ubuntu School Leadership

1. Executive summary

Ubuntu leadership, rooted in African values, emphasizes collaboration, respect, and inclusion, principles that align closely with the African Union's Agenda 2063 for transformative development across the continent. This study aims to develop a model of Ubuntu School Leadership (USL) tailored to Rwanda's educational system, with a focus on enhancing leadership practices and fostering active stakeholder involvement. Specifically, the research seeks to explore how Ubuntu leadership can shape school leadership within Rwanda, while drawing comparisons with similar African educational contexts.

The research objectives are threefold: first, to investigate the extent to which Ubuntu principles are currently reflected in school leadership practices; second, to examine how a USL model can meet established leadership standards in schools; and finally, to explore strategies for integrating Ubuntu principles into leadership development programs. The study aspires to create a comprehensive USL framework that will contribute to the African Centre for School Leadership's ongoing efforts to advance research on educational leadership across Africa.

A qualitative approach will be employed to gain in-depth insights into the perspectives of key educational stakeholders on Ubuntu leadership. This approach is particularly suited for examining complex behaviours, attitudes, and cultural dynamics that are not easily captured through quantitative methods. Semi-structured interviews will allow participants to share personal experiences and interpretations of Ubuntu leadership, which will inform the development of a practical implementation framework.

The study will involve 36 participants from four high-performing secondary schools in Huye, Rwanda, along with educational leaders at both district and national levels. These schools have been selected based on their academic performance in Mathematics, a key indicator of educational success in the region. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in English or Kinyarwanda, depending on the participant's language preference. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis, identifying and interpreting major themes that emerge from the interviews. To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, methods such as credibility checks, and peer debriefing will be employed, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences and perspectives.

2. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore is to explore Ubuntu school leadership (USL) dimension of fostering stakeholder involvement in the Rwandan context. Although schools have the legitimate and formal mandate of providing quality education through proper leadership and management, schools in Africa continue to suffer from leadership challenges (Pansiri, Ugwu, et al., 2021). Such challenges are evidenced by unethical practices such as corruption, sexual misconduct, and maladministration (Ugwu & Pansiri, 2022). While Eurocentric scholars argue that poor leadership in Africa was caused by lack of organisational, economic, and political abilities (Dimkpa, 2015), Afrocentric scholars (Makore et al., 2022; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012; Ugwu et al., 2022), blame practices of unsuitable Eurocentric leadership systems. These contrasting views motivate the desire to find a non-adversarial intersection between Eurocentric and Afrocentric leadership practices (Msengana, 2006; Msila, 2012; Nkambule, 2023; Pansiri, Mphathiwa, et al., 2021; Ugwu et al., 2022).

In Rwanda, like elsewhere, school leaders are charged with the responsibility of overseeing different activities in their schools such as engagement of internal and external stakeholders for school improvement (Cheriyan et al., 2021), teacher support, and effective utilisation of resources (Bush et al., 2022). Nevertheless, Karareba et al., (2019) argue that attempts by Rwandan school leaders to achieve the country's education agendas continue to be undermined by colonial legacies. Similar assertion is seen in existing studies (Biao, 2022; Tolliver et al., 2017) which show that education agendas in Africa are majorly Eurocentric, rather than Afrocentric, resulting in poor implementation and lack of effectiveness. The Western-driven education is more curriculum-focused, and it uses education as a principal tool for human capital development. This view is supported by Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) who argued that education in post-colonial Africa is aimed at producing highly trained manpower that are capable of replacing foreign expatriates. Consequently, minimal efforts and resources are spent on preparing school leaders for post-colonial nation-state schools, with scholars such as Van Wyk & Higgs (2011) advocating for the adoption of curricula that is indigenously grounded and oriented to the needs of African continent. Following the deficiencies of Eurocentrism (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012), it is becoming necessary to create a leadership system with indigenous identity that is suitable for the development of Rwandan and African educational systems– towards reclaiming indigeneity. Such leadership system is necessary in the Rwandan context where poor performance has been linked to poor leadership styles (Harelimana & Adegoke, 2017), and high repetition and dropout rates have continued to affect the efficiency of the country's education system, necessitating improved internal efficiency (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Ubuntu leadership has emerged as an Africanised leadership model, with indigenous identity, capable of solving school leadership challenges in Rwanda and the African continent at large (Davis, 2021; Elonga Mboyo, 2019). The leadership model fosters collaboration, respect, empathy, inclusion, and positive change (Chetty & Price, 2024), and it is relevant in equipping

learners with skills and cross-cultural competencies needed to succeed in the fourth industrial revolution (Pansiri, Mphathiwa, et al., 2021). Such a model could therefore be useful in developing effective school leadership which, in turn, is critical to addressing key factors underlying learning challenges in Rwandan schools such as weak school management, unproductive educational inputs, poor teaching quality, and unprepared learners (Bush et al., 2022).

The crux of this study is to explore USL dimension of fostering stakeholder involvement in Rwanda. It supports the African Union Agenda 2063 of reclaiming and embracing African values and culture in the African renaissance initiative (African Union, 2013). Furthermore, it aligns with a major strategic priority of the Rwanda Basic Education Board (Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2020) and the African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) towards developing effective school leadership for improved teaching and learning outcomes. The study will reflect and consolidate the perceptions of teachers, members of school leadership teams, officials in education, parents, the community, and other stakeholders, and compare them with existing studies in similar African contexts. In the final analysis, a comprehensive concept and model of USL that will aid in its effective implementation in the African education context and beyond will be developed.

3. Research aim, objectives and questions

Research aim and objective

The major aim of this study is to explore the key dimensions and characteristics of USL in relation to stakeholder involvement as perceived by stakeholders in Rwandan education system. To achieve this aim, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore how the current standards of Effective School Leadership reflect Ubuntu principles?
2. Investigate how USL can be adopted to achieve the standards of effective school leadership
3. Examine how Ubuntu leadership competencies can be integrated into professional development efforts in schools.

Primary research question

"What are the key dimensions and characteristics of USL as perceived by stakeholders in Rwanda, and how do these align with or differ from existing understandings of Ubuntu leadership in other African contexts?"

Sub-questions

1. How do the current standards of Effective School Leadership reflect *Ubuntu* principles?

2. How can *Ubuntu* leadership be effectively adopted to achieve the standards of effective school leadership?
3. How can *Ubuntu* leadership competencies be integrated into School Leadership Professional Development (SL PD)?

4. Significance, scope and limitations

4.1. Significance of the study

1. The findings will be used by the ACSL and partners to understand, promote and adapt practices and competencies linked to the *Ubuntu* approach of school leadership.
2. The findings will be shared on regional knowledge and exchange platforms to inform policies and practice.
3. The findings will be shared with the donors, academics, and practitioners to unlock opportunities for further support and engagement.
4. The final report will be used by the ACSL for a variety of communication, advocacy and engagement purposes.
5. Findings will generate *Ubuntu* leadership implementation framework that will be used to implement such leadership practices and competencies in Rwanda, the entire African continent and beyond.

4.2. Scope of the study

African literature on educational leadership traditions, values, and approaches is limited in nature and context. Therefore, through this study, Rwanda can reclaim its traditional values and culture and embrace them in the school leadership system to enrich its Africanity. This project will reflect and consolidate the perceptions of teachers, members of school leadership teams, parents, the community, and other stakeholders on the Ubuntu school leadership. In the final analysis, a comprehensive framework on Ubuntu school leadership will be developed.

4.3. Limitation

The researchers are second-language English speakers and non-Rwandan citizens which could present some language barriers. To mitigate this language-related limitation, the study has engaged the services of experienced Rwandan research assistants (a University of Rwanda senior lecturer and an enumerator), who will also be able to conduct interviews in Kinyarwanda, as well as translate and interpret Kinyarwanda into the English language. The researchers have not been to Rwanda, but one of the researchers, who is a Motswana, will visit Rwanda and have some sort of orientation with the research assistants and related stakeholders, in particular, the ACSL core team, and to appreciate the practical background information about the country, its culture, values, and its education system. The findings of this study will be derived from Rwandan participants only. However, by comparing the

findings with available findings from other African countries, a comprehensive framework for implementing Ubuntu in Africa will be developed.

5. Literature Review

The quest to improve education quality in any education system can be readily achieved through effective school leadership (Day & Sammons, 2014; Laila, 2015; Ndlovu, 2017). This is because school leaders play a crucial role in creating conditions for effective pedagogy, and so no school can sustainably improve its education quality without effective school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2020; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Mukingambeho et al., 2023; VVOB, 2019). In addition, school leaders are responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school, teacher selection and support, budget monitoring, maintenance of school facilities, and fostering positive relationships with wider community (Lauterbach et al., 2024). To play their roles effectively, school leaders apply a range of leadership styles and models which have direct relationship with their effectiveness (Al-Khaled & Chung, 2020). This implies that the leadership style or model adopted by school leaders can either translate to success or failure as evidenced by several bodies of literatures (Aghahowa, 2021; Crawfurd, 2017; Lacerda, 2015; Ojokuku et al., 2013).

Lopez et al. (not yet published) identified numerous Eurocentric leadership models that have been found useful by African school leaders including pedagogical leadership, distributed leadership, and transformational leadership. However, quality education remains out of reach for many learners on the continent (UNESCO & African Union, 2023; Zickafoose et al., 2024), suggesting that existing leadership theories and practices may be ineffective in Africa due to the continent's collective and humanistic cultures (Muller, 2017). A qualitative study by Makore et al. (2022) involving participants from Botswana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe showed that school leadership and management systems in post-colonial Africa are influenced heavily by Eurocentrism, thereby undermining the African context where such leadership practices are applied. Consequently, there is a shift towards contextually relevant leadership models characterised by African values such as moral virtues, collectivism, and humanism (Ugwu et al., 2022), that can translate to improved educational outcomes for African learners (Moorosi & Bush, 2020). Ubuntu offers a theoretical framework for conceptualising such leadership in a culturally relevant manner (Davis, 2021). It is therefore necessary to develop an alternative school leadership approach that would promote leadership effectiveness, by exploring the views of education stakeholders in the African continent.

This section presents a succinct review of literature on the concept and practice of USL in African schools. The review is presented in line with the primary and sub-research questions posed in this study, followed by the theoretical and conceptual framework that will guide the study. The review provides a comprehensive understanding of the concept of USL in different African contexts as the data will be used to draw a comparison to empirical data that will be obtained in the Rwandan context.

5.1. Dimensions, characteristics and practices of Ubuntu leadership

The term Ubuntu is idiomatically expressed as '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* in Bantu languages of South Africa which loosely translates to '*a person is a person through other people*' (Davis, 2021; Fagunwa, 2019; Iwowo, 2015; Nkambule, 2023; Pansiri, Mphathiwa, et al., 2021). Although different countries in the African continent have used different contextual terms to describe the concept of Ubuntu, the different descriptions have shared meanings. According to Bulawa & Mhlauli (2021) and Fagunwa (2019), the fundamental notion behind Ubuntu is that our existence lies in the collective existence of humanity. This implies that community strength emerges from community support, while happiness and success is attainable through community commitment, self-sacrifice, altruistic living, and communal living. A similar view is held by Asiimwe (2023) and Msila (2008) who argued that Ubuntu translates to basic values of love, humanness, sharing, caring, compassion and respect, and it embraces positive values such as commitment, warmth, giving, and empathy.

In the Rwandan context, *Ubuntu* can be translated as *Ubumuntu* which means to be humane or humanism. Hence from the Rwandan context *Ubumuntu* entails to genuinely care about others, to be kind and generous, to show empathy, to be sympathetic to the plight of others and to recognize the humanity of others (Musundi, 2018). In this regard *Ubumuntu* or *Ubuntu* therefore advocates for humanistic and moral considerations underpinned by collective endeavour and community-oriented preferences (Eyong, 2019). Core principles of Ubuntu as presented by Laloo (2022) include interdependence, empathy, communalism, compassion, fairness, equity, dignity, inclusivity, hospitality, reciprocity, harmony, responsiveness, and sense of shared destiny among individuals. In terms of leadership, Brubaker (2013) argued that Ubuntu describes an act where leaders show their followers that they are human and deserve to be treated with humanness (Brubaker, 2013). Nevertheless, this study focuses on the dimension that relates to stakeholder inclusion, involvement and engagement. The study assumes that other facets of Ubuntu may not be achievable if stakeholders are not adequately involved in leadership.

In terms of leadership, Ubuntu promotes collective, rather than individual interest, reinforces social relations, and encourages closer affinity between an organisation and their stakeholders (Eyong, 2019). Simply put, in Ubuntu philosophy, people are not viewed as "*individuals living in a state of independence, but as part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence*" (Nzimakwe, 2014, p. 36). In South Africa, a study by Mbhele (2015) showed that Ubuntu has the potential to improve school leadership by promoting human dignity, trust, and collectivism. In Senegal, Davis (2021) portrayed Ubuntu as strong connection between school, parents, and the entire local population to promote school effectiveness. Similarly, studies in different African contexts, such as Nigeria (Adewale, 2020) and South Africa (Olatubosun & Nyazenga, 2020), show that Ubuntu enhances positive relationships between organisations and community stakeholders, and its tenets are applied

by different practitioners to build organisational reputation (Anani-Bossman, 2021). The positive relationship engendered by Ubuntu is achieved through school leadership that respects diversity, serves as role model, draws teachers and the community into leadership practices, and is sympathetic and empathic to problems and concerns of different stakeholders (Naicker, 2015). By applying Ubuntu tenets, leadership becomes a process characterised by interrelationships among stakeholders who work together to formulate and achieve shared goals (Msengana, 2006).

Elonga Mboyo (2019), using narrative data from head teachers in two urban primary schools in Democratic Republic of Congo, showed that Ubuntu has unique operational pattern of raised expectations and commitment to organisational goals, assessing available resources, and understanding, negotiating, prioritising, and attending to the needs of others. This implies that Ubuntu seeks for service to entire school community using available resources. In other words, Ubuntu advocates for commitment to be just and equitable to all by weighing and balancing legal and professional imperatives within ethical and democratic context with an ultimate responsibility to the people and public interest (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019). Similarly, findings from a study involving participants from Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia showed that Ubuntu philosophy can support leadership practices by fostering unity, collectivism, teamwork, collaboration, and inclusivity (Lopez et al., not yet published). Ubuntu leadership can therefore be harnessed to improve school leadership in African context (Naicker, 2015).

In the Rwandan context, Ubuntu can be translated as Ubumuntu which means to be humane or humanism. Hence from the Rwandan context Ubumuntu entails to genuinely care about others, to be kind and generous, to show empathy, to be sympathetic to the plight of others and to recognize the humanity of others (Musundi, 2018). In this regard Ubumuntu or Ubuntu therefore advocates for humanistic and moral considerations underpinned by collective endeavour and community-oriented preferences (Eyong, 2019). Core principles of Ubuntu as presented by Laloo (2022) include interdependence, empathy, communalism, compassion, fairness, equity, dignity, inclusivity, hospitality, reciprocity, harmony, responsiveness, and sense of shared destiny among individuals. In terms of leadership, Brubaker (2013) argued that Ubuntu describes an act where leaders show their followers that they are human and deserve to be treated with humanness (Brubaker, 2013). Nevertheless, this study focuses on the dimension that relates to stakeholder inclusion, involvement and engagement. The study assumes that other facets of Ubuntu may not be achievable if stakeholders are not adequately involved in leadership. In Rwandan context, Brubaker (2013) argues that Ubuntu leadership is significantly and positively related to leadership effectiveness. However, the argument does not provide a guideline that can engender effective school leadership using the tenets of Ubuntu. In other words, there is no empirical evidence on the practice of Ubuntu leadership approach in the Rwandan school leadership context, underpinning the need for such study. Through this study, Ubuntu leadership model will be better contextualised, making the model

more pronounced in African leadership systems (Olatubosun & Nyazenga, 2020). A similar argument by Lopez & Rugano (2018) suggest that education leaders in developing countries face unique problems different from their Western counterparts and as such leadership theories and practices must be contextualised for effectiveness.

5.2. Relating Ubuntu to standards for effective school leadership in Rwandan context

In a bid to promote effective leadership in schools, different education systems have developed standards for effective school leadership. The major aim of establishing these standards is to enhance effectiveness of professional selection, preparation and development of school leaders (Ingvarson et al., 2006). According to McMahon & Torrance (2023), professional standards, benchmarks, and frameworks for leadership play important roles in setting out skills and competencies for school leaders, and they function as instruments for accountability, certification, accreditation, and development. In the United States of America, the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders prescripts that effective school leaders must develop, enact, and advocate shared vision, mission, and core values of high-quality education and learners' well-being (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The standard further posits that effective leadership can be achieved through collaboration with members of the school and community, and by cultivating core values such as trust, caring, openness, social justice, inclusiveness, and equity (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). These core values are aligned with Ubuntu principles. Scott (2018) however noted that there is need to review available leadership standards in the international sphere by engaging school leaders and other community stakeholders to ensure they align with local needs. It is therefore obvious that even though Ubuntu principles are embedded in the leadership standards, they were not developed using Ubuntu tenets resulting to lack of ownership and implementation.

Gallie & Keevy (2014) previously argued that only few countries in Southern Africa had developed professional standards for school leadership, with countries like Namibia struggling to move from policy promulgation phase to implementation. However, countries in Africa are increasingly developing such standards. Cameroon, for instance, recently updated its Professional Standard for Educational Leaders to embrace several tenets of Ubuntu such as diversity, equity, equal opportunity, and involvement of educational community among others (Ashu et al., 2021). It remains to be seen if this standard is implemented in line with Ubuntu principles. On the other hand, the available professional standards in Ghana are majorly for teachers, and it advocates for positive engagement with all stakeholders and wider public (National Teacher Council, 2017). Such involvement is reflected in the humanness that underlies Ubuntu leadership. Similar to Ghana, there are no specific effective school leadership standards in Kenya, but school leadership preparation and development is recognised in courses offered by universities and professional associations (Asuga et al., 2015). Asuga et al. (2015) further argued that such effort is haphazard, ad hoc,

and not responsive to the needs of current and aspiring school leaders. This necessitates the exploration of existing standards of effective school leadership to ensure they are contextually relevant to education stakeholders.

Unlike most countries in Africa, Rwanda has a comprehensive set of standards for effective school leadership. The standards were developed by REB, through its school Leadership and Management Unit, and in collaboration with local education leaders, schools, and development partners (Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2020). The standards include creating strategic direction, leading learning and teaching, managing the school as an organisation, and collaborating with parents and wider community (Lauterbach et al., 2024; Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2020). An important facet of these standards that reflects Ubuntu tenets is collaboration with wider community. The leadership standard prescripts that school leaders should ensure collaboration by mobilising parents and wider community to support the realisation of school vision, mission, and goals (Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2020) However, there is lack of evidence on how the leadership standards align with specific cultural and philosophical concepts such as Ubuntu, and how Ubuntu principles can be integrated into the formal school leadership standards. Furthermore, there is no framework or guideline for adopting the leadership standards to local philosophical and cultural context in Rwanda. In other words, there is limited understanding of how Ubuntu philosophy can be translated into actionable leadership practices that could aid in achieving the standards for effective leadership in the Rwandan educational context. The current study therefore aims to explore stakeholders view on how the current standards of effective school leadership reflect Ubuntu principles, and how these standards can be effectively adapted/implemented using Ubuntu competencies in the Rwanda contexts as seen in the first and second research questions respectively. Through such exploration, the standard of leadership in Rwanda will be better adapted (Lopez et al., not yet published). leading to increased ownership, better implementation, and improved education quality. As Iwowo (2015) puts it, engaging carefully with indignity will engender creative adaptation and appropriation of effective leadership standards through contextualisation, leading to more reflexive organisational practice.

5.3. Implementing Ubuntu school leadership

Ubuntu has been heralded in Indigenous South African communities as a context-resonant leadership approach and practice that befits the African institutional and socio-cultural environment (Eyong, 2019). The leadership philosophy contains an ideal model for employing democratic leadership, and its context responsive nature has made it ideal for African school leadership (Msila, 2008). USL could therefore be seen as a school leadership framework that responds to current and future educational environments as nations seek to adapt their education systems to their contemporary needs (Lopez & Rugano, 2018), empirical studies that explore models and manifestations of Ubuntu leadership by incorporating its key dimensions for managerial application have remained elusive (Eyong, 2019). It is therefore

necessary to develop a comprehensive model or framework that will aid in the adoption of USL.

While scholars such as Mdluli et al. (2021) suggested the infusion of Ubuntu into school curriculum, Nkambule (2023), in a study involving 9 teachers in South Africa, recommended three strategies for implementing USL. They include supporting collective knowledge exchange; forging non-adversarial intersection between indigenous and mainstream or Western-oriented leadership practices; and moderating the incorporation of contextually relevant ethical grounding which considers the sustenance of teacher knowledge sharing culture, teacher curriculum delivery, learner performance, and overall school effectiveness. In line with the second recommendation, the study (Nkambule, 2023) further supported the adoption of Westernised leadership approaches such as transformational and participative leadership styles which promote the ethos of Ubuntu, while leadership styles such as managerial, autocratic, and transactional which contribute to erosion of Ubuntu values should be ditched. A similar view is held by Bush (2007); Moorosi & Bantwini (2016); Msila (2008) who argued that distributed leadership, which is akin to participative and democratic leadership styles, is connected to African-oriented Ubuntu leadership. Although the findings by Nkambule (2023) were derived from the views of only one set of stakeholders, the second recommendation is supported by other bodies of evidence (Msengana, 2006; Pansiri, Mphathiwa, et al., 2021). In a book chapter that was not informed by empirical evidence, Pansiri, Mphathiwa, et al. (2021) suggested a USL implementation framework that illustrates the practicality of an improved school leadership system based on Ubuntu- an Afrocentric philosophy of social development, and globalisation- a Eurocentric philosophy of economic development. However, there is need to develop an implementation framework based on empirical evidence from different education stakeholders.

In a similar context as Msila (2012) and Nkambule (2023) described how a school leader applied distributive leadership sandwiched with Ubuntu principles to transform the fortunes of a school previously known for poor performance. The school leader organised monthly workshops on stakeholders' expectations, disabled clique, stopped the use of unprofessional language, instilled Ubuntu values among educators, celebrated staff birthdays and achievements during professional development, and made all staff part of the school's success. Furthermore, the school head formed collaborative committees in the school and magnified the school's vision by repeatedly stating the role of educators in the community. In summary, the school principal re-energised and retrained staff, and redefined leadership using values and morals that are reflected in USL. It is therefore obvious that USL, when properly implemented, can lead to leadership effectiveness. Mbhele (2015) in a study involving South African teachers showed that many teachers view role modelling and trust as important values in implementation of Ubuntu, with group activities such as music, theatrical acting and sports, suitable strategies for USL implementation. The study however showed that USL implementation is hindered by challenges such as school burglaries, drug abuse, and

poor parental involvement. In South African schools, Msila (2014) showed that introduction of alternative leadership style such as USL is accompanied with employee resistance. The study outlined the need to assist employees to adapt to such leadership through professional development. This further highlights the importance of integrating USL in continuous professional development (CPD) during its implementation. Finally, Mokhutso (2022) and Tusasiirwe et al. (2021) argued that a major challenge to Ubuntu implementation is the ongoing re-colonisation that is manifested in Eurocentric systems in Africa which dwindle community interaction. It is left to be seen if these challenges are capable of hindering the implementation of USL in Rwandan context.

Ukpokodu (2016) developed five principles for effective implementation of Ubuntu transformative pedagogy. These principles include "*understanding self and others, building positive relationships, getting the class to work together, nurturing the minds of students, teaching with love and care, and utilising learners' linguistic resources in promoting meaningful learning*"(Ngubane & Makua, 2021, p. 7). These principles conceptualise Ubuntu as a revolutionary approach for restoring learners' humanity through genuine love and care in educational practice (Zhu, 2019). For Ukpokodu (2016), Ubuntu competence is the ability and willingness of educators to embrace humanness by showing awareness that his/her humanity is intricately correlated to the humanity of others. However, these principles focus on one aspect of school leadership which is enhanced pedagogy, hence the need to develop an all-embracing framework for implementing USL in African context. This is in line with the suggestion by Pansiri, Ugwu, et al. (2021) to formulate and institute an indigenised framework that will embrace African values of Ubuntu to serve as guide for current and future school leaders. Nevertheless, Ubuntu pedagogy, as a transformative approach, has the potential to reconnect students with their heritage, culture and indigenous values, and the capacity to cultivate Ubuntu social values of co-existence, cooperation, solidarity, and respect among students (Ngubane & Makua, 2021).

In the African context, a study by Lopez et al. (not yet published) involving three African countries- Kenya, Ghana and Zambia, gave useful insights on the implementation of USL. Findings from the study showed that USL can be implemented by identifying challenges hindering school effectiveness, seeking solutions to these challenges through the community, empowering leaders within and outside the school, and raising expectations and commitment to school goals. Findings from the study further showed that school leadership success is linked to building authentic and positive relationships with communities and achieving pedagogical and academic goals of the school. Major leadership competencies highlighted in the study which includes organisation, teamwork, empathy, ability to work with all stakeholders, and being approachable are reflective of Ubuntu principles. It however remains to be seen if these competencies can be integrated and implemented to achieve school leadership effectiveness. In Rwanda, Brubaker (2013), in collaboration with seven experts including four educators, developed a 12-scale item for measuring Ubuntu-related leadership.

The 12-item scale, which contains Ubuntu competencies, include providing valuable counsel and resources for followers, working with the community, involving stakeholders in decision-making, and showing respect, fairness, empathy among others. However, the study, which recommended that more studies should be done to explore the multidimensionality of Ubuntu as a leadership construct, failed to provide evidence for integrating Ubuntu leadership competencies in school leadership systems. It is therefore necessary to explore stakeholders' views on possible place of Ubuntu in improving school leadership effectiveness in Rwandan/ African schools and beyond.

Adopting Ubuntu does not signify supremacy of African leadership models over westernised ones; rather, it points out ways for combining the two knowledge systems to achieve leadership effectiveness (Msengana, 2006). Findings from a study by Ugwu et al. (2022) involving participants from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Botswana underlined the need to strike a balance between Africanism and Eurocentrism in the current school leadership systems in Africa. Ubuntu therefore seeks to weaken Eurocentric ideologies that draw from individualism, Euroscepticism, and exclusivity (Ngubane & Makua, 2021), by embracing both Eurocentric and Afrocentric ideologies that are suitable for the African context. In addition, non-adversarial intersection between Western and indigenous leadership practices can add impetus to leadership roles in education systems faced with unique challenges such as limited resources and other nuances such as gender inequality (Nkambule, 2023). The USL implementation framework that will be developed in this study will not displace Eurocentric leadership ideas completely; rather it will re-produce the existing Eurocentric models to be better adapted to Rwanda and the entire Africa. Through well-developed implementation framework, there will be enactment of Ubuntu values in Rwandan and African schools, leading to trust between the school and community, which will in turn establish positive reputation and sustained school success (Davis, 2021).

5.4. Role of Ubuntu in school leadership professional development

In addition to professional standards discussed in the previous section, development opportunities for school leaders and teachers have proven to be indispensable in education sectors across sub-Saharan Africa (Nyirahabimana & Magagura, 2023). On one hand, leadership and management training constitute a major step in unleashing the potential of school leaders to improve school quality (Uworwabayeho et al., 2020), while on the other hand, CPD is necessary in improving institutional performance and learning outcomes(Banik & Saha, 2023; Faizuddin et al., 2022; Owusu-Boateng, 2022). A similar view is held by Uworwabayeho et al. (2020) who argued that CPD motivates educators and engenders continuous improvement and positive school culture. Furthermore, skills acquired through CPD influences leadership approaches, improves existing practices and engenders new initiatives aimed towards improved outcomes (Mukingambeho et al., 2023). Effective school leadership can therefore be achieved by reorienting school leaders' roles through

professional development opportunities (Bush et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of CPD depends on its ability to engage participants by fostering a positive mindset that encourages the development of requisite skills and knowledge (Germuth, 2018).

In Rwanda, several efforts have been made towards improving the competencies of school leaders through CPD. These efforts can be seen in the Continuous Professional Development Diploma in Effective School Leadership Manual (University of Rwanda College of Education, 2023), the Learning through Assessment and Data (LEAD) programme (VVOB, 2022), and the national teacher CPD framework (Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2019) among others. Similar efforts have also been made in other African countries such as Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia (Lopez et al.; not yet published). Through collaborative efforts of multinational organisations, academic, and government agencies, Rwandan CPD programmes have utilised models of shared leadership to improve the competencies and skills of educational leaders across different education levels (Nyirahabimana & Magagura, 2023). Existing evidence (Lauterbach et al., 2024; Mukingambeho et al., 2023; Uworwabayeho et al., 2020) shows that these CPD efforts have yielded positive outcomes, but there is still a lot of room for further improvements (Uwamariya & Andala, 2022). The need for further improvements is made obvious in the suggestion by Ministry of Education (2024) to enhance education quality by providing in-service training to about 3,787 educators to enhance their practices. Furthermore, findings from the study conducted by Mukingambeho et al. (2023) in Rwanda underlined the need to incorporate all stakeholders and school community in CPD programmes so that they will have a common understanding of their roles in promoting school effectiveness.

Fostering positive relationship with community was identified as crucial in promoting leadership development in the Ghanaian education sector (Aryeh-Adjei, 2021). Such stakeholder participation underlies Ubuntu principles. Furthermore, in the African context, Lopez et al. (not yet published) argued that policy makers and school leadership professional development providers can leverage on their local knowledge to inform school leadership professional development. Coaching and mentoring from peers and insights from leadership networks were identified in the study (Lopez et al.; not yet published) as useful practices for developing leadership competencies- hence the need to integrate them in professional development by seeking complementarity between formal and informal components of professional development. A study in Rwandan context by Lauterbach et al. (2024) showed that compliance to CPD programmes is imperfect due to lack of ownership, suggesting the need for optimisation of such programmes by exploring underlying mechanisms for enhancing their effectiveness. According to Ugwu et al. (2022), current SL development systems in Africa are not properly designed and coordinated to develop African leadership values such as *Ubuntu.* Perhaps incorporating the concept of Ubuntu into existing CPD programmes could help to ameliorate the concerns raised in the aforementioned studies in the Rwandan context (Lauterbach et al., 2024; Mukingambeho et al., 2023). This is because

the hallmark of Ubuntu philosophy which is to develop the skills of all stakeholders (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019) aligns with the aim of CPD programmes.

According to Stevenson et al. (2016), achieving the purposes of CPD is sensitive to contextual factors. It is therefore necessary to consider different factors such as culture, existing philosophies, and gender in the design and implementation of CPD programmes. A similar view is held by Lopez et al. (not yet published) who argued that school leadership professional development should draw on local knowledge, such as Ubuntu and gender nuances, to inform both school leadership practices and professional development efforts. Similarly, Gallie and Keevy (2014) buttressed the need to emphasise local values and cultures in educators' professionalism such as collectivism, gender and social nuances, instead of favouring foreign models of teacher education such as individualism. Ubuntu, which emphasises the richness of people's cultural heritage, can therefore go a long way in providing principles for school leadership practices (Msengana, 2006) such as training and CPD. By implementing Ubuntu principles in school leadership professional development, education stakeholders will be developed to position humanness and equity at the forefront of teaching and learning (Ngubane & Makua, 2021), leading to school effectiveness.

Despite the potency of Ubuntu in enhancing school leadership professional development and overall leadership practices, there is no existing empirical evidence backing up this claim in Rwandan context. Furthermore, there is unavailability of training programs that explicitly incorporate USL into school leadership professional development by taking into account contextual nuances such as gender, equity and inclusion. It is therefore necessary to develop evidence-based consensus on relevant Ubuntu competencies for school leadership effectiveness in the Rwandan context so as to incorporate these competencies into existing professional development programmes. Such study will be a perfect response to the recommendation by Lopez et al. (not yet published) to integrate Ubuntu principles in empowering school leaders and in enhancing educational outcomes.

5.5. Summary of reviewed literature and identified research gaps

This literature review has highlighted the need to adopt Afrocentric leadership models such as Ubuntu in order to improve school leadership practices in Rwanda and Africa. The dimensions and characteristics of Ubuntu school leadership have been explored in other contexts, but not in the Rwandan context, underpinning the need to explore the concept and practice of Ubuntu in the Rwandan education system. Such study is necessary because Ubuntu promotes humanness, respect, fairness, equity, inclusivity, and collectivism. Several education sectors, including Rwanda, have developed standards for effective school leadership. Some parts of these standards reflect Ubuntu principles. However, there is need to explore the views of education stakeholders on how the standards of effective school leadership reflect Ubuntu principles as reflected in the first research question. Furthermore,

contextual factors have been identified to play a significant role in implementing leadership standards. Hence, there is need to explore how the effective leadership standards can be better adapted using Ubuntu principles in the Rwandan context so as to promote effective school leadership. This need is captured in the second research question. In addition, while some literatures showed how Ubuntu can be implemented, others pointed to the need to develop a context relevant Ubuntu implementation framework, while some others highlighted the need to combine Afrocentric leadership philosophies such as Ubuntu with Eurocentric philosophies that reflect Ubuntu principles. It is however pertinent to develop a comprehensive framework, informed by empirical evidence from different education stakeholders, for implementing USL to achieve the standards of effective school leadership. Using Rwandan context, this study seeks to develop USL implementation framework that will aid in adoption of the USL approach in Rwanda and beyond. CPD for school leaders has been identified as key to leadership success. Several efforts have been made towards CPD in the Rwandan context, with Ubuntu being recognised as a potent practice for improved CPD. However, there is need to explore how Ubuntu can be employed in enhancing such efforts not just in Rwanda but in other countries in Africa. The third research question therefore seeks to explore how USL can be applied in school leaders training and CPD.

5.6. Theoretical framework

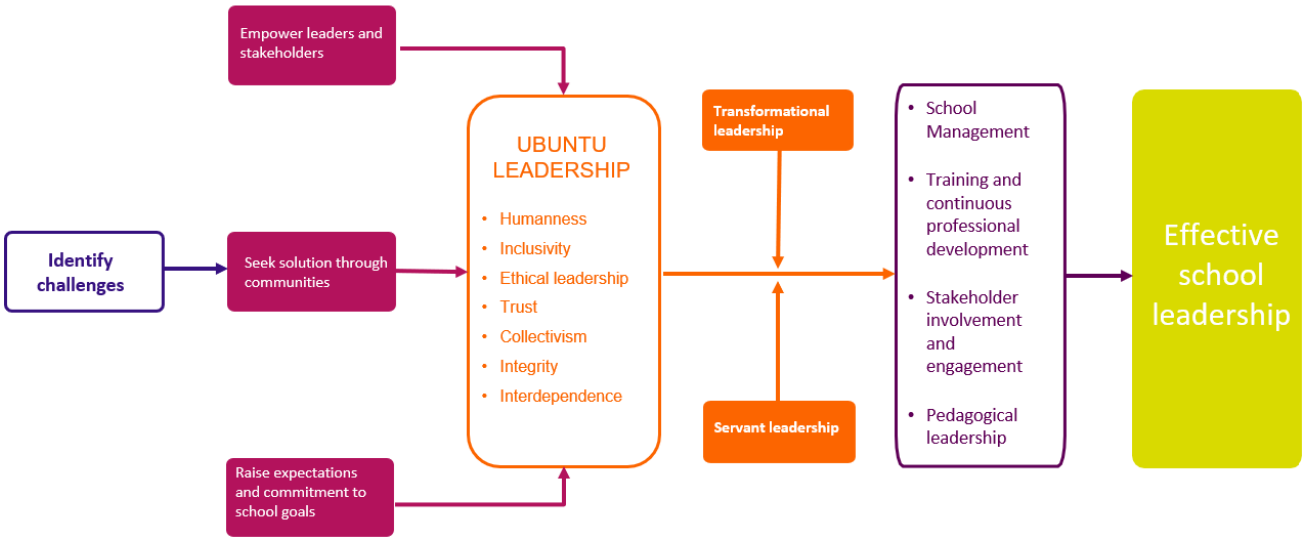
This study will be underpinned theoretically by *Ubuntu* philosophy, and two leadership theories- transformational and servant leadership. In line with the *Ubuntu* philosophy which has been illustrated in detail in the preceding sections, this study assumes that school leadership should embrace a more collective approach where the well-being of the community is prioritised over individual interests. On the same hand, the servant leadership theory asserts that leaders should focus on the needs of others by acknowledging their views, involving them in decision making, and building a sense of community within different stakeholders (Kolzow, 2014; Ugwu, 2021). This theory emphasises relationships and aligns with communal values reflected in *Ubuntu* leadership. A servant leader is therefore genuinely more concerned about serving stakeholders' and followers' needs (Greenleaf, 1977). R. K. Greenleaf (2003), who propounded this theory, argued that through servant leadership, educators can serve the needs of stakeholders such as learners by encouraging them to consciously become leaders themselves. This shows that servant leadership advocates for CPD through coaching and mentoring. In addition, servant leadership advocates for high level of morality and motivation among leaders and other stakeholders (Wahyu & Lantu, 2014). The cultural perspectives of USL therefore align with human orientation, role modelling, ethicality and power distancing reflected in servant leadership. Finally, servant leadership which serves the needs of stakeholders is apposite for the study because a leader whose behaviours are consistent with stakeholders' expectation is likely to have more influence leading to overall effectiveness (Heres, 2014).

In the same vein with servant leadership theory, transformational leadership theory assumes that leaders must work together with followers to identity needed changes, and to inspire them to execute the needed changes in an organisation (Campos, 2020). Transformational leadership theory views leadership as a process of inspiring others to be committed to shared goals and to solve organisational issues through innovative means developed via coaching and mentoring (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This theory therefore supports CPD which is one the key areas that the current study intends to infuse USL. The four elements of transformational leadership theory are also implicated in this study, and they intersect with various USL principles. Through inspirational motivation, this study assumes that school leaders should be able to motivate different stakeholders to commit towards school's goals (Farnsworth et al., 2020). In line with intellectual stimulation, a school leader empowers stakeholders to stimulate innovation, critical thinking and creativity (Renjith et al., 2015). Following idealised influence facet, school leaders should possess high moral and ethical standards (Northouse, 2016) to engender respect and trust (Ugochukwu, 2023) thereby enhancing the reputation of the school. The role of transformational leadership in building reputation further shows the intersection between the leadership theory and Ubuntu which has proven to enhance reputation (Anani-Bossman, 2021). Finally, in line with individual consideration element of transformational leadership an Ubuntu school leader is expected to focus on the ways different stakeholders can contribute to overall organisation goals (Ugochukwu, 2023) by acting as coach, teacher, mentor, advisors, and listener (Farnsworth et al., 2020). In summary, this study assumes that in line with *Ubuntu* philosophy, servant and transformational leadership theories (UST), education stakeholders including school leaders, teachers, students, parents and other members of the school community must work as a single unit to achieve the education goals of any nation. As summarised by Brubaker (2013) and Patterson (2003), servant leadership theory which is an extension of transformational leadership theory draws attention to social responsibilities of leaders in addressing their followers' needs as reflected in Ubuntu principles.

5.7. Conceptual framework

In the context of this study the conceptual framework seeks the interconnectedness between relevant ideas that will aid in exploring the research problem (Adom et al., 2018). In line with Crawford's (2020) suggestion, the conceptual framework, presented in Figure 1, was designed using reviewed research, theories, and personal experiences of the researchers to show coherent representation of this study.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for promoting effective school leadership through UST



Source: Researchers' conceptualisation; Lopez et al. (not yet published)

From Figure 1, it is assumed that following the views of Lopez et al. (not yet published) which are presented in section 4.3, USL can be adopted by identifying challenges in schools, seeking solution through communities, empowering school leaders and stakeholders, and raising expectations and commitment to school goals. As further reflected in the figure, effective school leadership can be promoted through a combination of Ubuntu, servant, and transformational (UST) leaderships. This aligns with the view that leadership effectiveness can be achieved in African schools by integrating Afrocentric philosophies such as Ubuntu, and Eurocentric philosophies such as servant and transformational leadership (Msengana, 2006; Nkambule, 2023; Pansiri, Ugwu, et al., 2021). Following proper integration of these leadership competencies, it is assumed that UST leadership can be applied in different facets which are captured in the standards of effective school leadership in Rwanda including school management, CPD, involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the school and school community, and pedagogical leadership which deals with effective pedagogy. Furthermore, UST leadership will invariably lead to the implementation of VVOB (2018) dimensional model of effective school leadership which revolves around enhanced pedagogy, improved organisational efficiency through restructuring, and enhanced relationship within and outside the school. By defining visions, direction and values through contextually adjusted model that captures unique needs, challenges, and experiences in Rwandan education system, school leaders will build trust among stakeholders leading to high expectations, student learning and wellbeing, and achievement of educational goals (VVOB, 2018). Finally, the conceptual framework in figure 1 could play significant roles in achieving ACSL theory of change. According to the theory, there is need to build supportive school leadership systems for promoting effective school leadership through stakeholders' collaboration (African Centre for School Leadership, 2024). It is therefore assumed that through proper adoption and integration of UST model which also advocates for stakeholder

involvement, there could be enhanced school leadership underpinned by social justice, improved school environment, stakeholders' wellbeing, and improved learning as highlighted in the African Centre for School Leadership's (2024) theory of change.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research paradigm

This study is aimed at exploring the concept and practice of *Ubuntu* school leadership. It will be guided by the interpretivist research paradigm which was recently used by the researchers (Mogatle et al., 2023; Seikano et al., 2024). The paradigm seeks to explore and understand individual interpretations of a social phenomenon (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016) and so it is appropriate for exploring the concept and practice of *Ubuntu* school leadership. In addition, the paradigm assumes that there are multiple socially constructed realities which can be investigated using methods such as interviews, observations, documents, and field notes, to generate qualitative data that can be used to create knowledge that adds explicit value through interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The researcher will therefore apply semi structured interviews (Annex 1) to understand the views and experiences of education stakeholders on the concept and practice of *Ubuntu* school leadership in order to develop a framework that will guide the implementation of such leadership style. Although this paradigm is criticised for being subjective, and the findings may not be generalised beyond the study context (Maree, 2007), it will allow the researcher to explore the world of the participants from a subjective perspective, so as to seek explanation based on their experiences (Ponelis, 2015). The findings will also be compared with findings in similar contexts and beyond to enhance their generalisability. In short, the researcher will describe and give details of the concept and practice of *Ubuntu* school leadership, and share the meanings derived from studying this phenomenon (Elliott & Lukeš, 2008).

6.2. Research approach

This study will adopt the qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and experiences of education stakeholders on the concept and practice of Ubuntu leadership. In addition to developing more comprehensive and robust knowledge (Petty et al., 2012), qualitative approach helps to explain patterns and processes of human behaviour that cannot be easily quantified (Tenny et al., 2024). In other words, it helps in the understanding of the behaviours, attitudes, and experiences of participants which cannot be captured accurately using quantitative approach. The major aim of choosing this approach is to conduct an in-depth investigation of the different perspectives (Smit, 2010) of education stakeholders on Ubuntu leadership, and to examine how they make sense of the phenomenon in their own words (Cropley, 2019). By entering the participants' world in their natural settings (Mohajan, 2018), the researchers will explore their perspectives, views and experiences (Creswell, 2009) on Ubuntu leadership.

In line with the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach will help to develop rich qualitative data instead of limiting the participants to fixed responses (Maree et al., 2007)

that may not reflect the views of education stakeholders. A major shortcoming of this approach is that findings are not derived using statistical means (Rahman, 2016). However, the approach emphasises on individual interpretation of their experiences and views of a phenomenon, making it apposite for this study.

6.3. Research design

Although there are different designs that can be adopted in a qualitative research approach such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative research (Creswell, 2009; Tenny et al., 2024), this study will adopt phenomenological research design which seeks to understand a phenomenon using the perspectives of those that perceive such phenomenon (Ataro, 2020). A similar view is held by Creswell (1998) who opined that the purpose of phenomenology is to explore and understand the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those that experience it. The major focus of this design will be to understand the phenomenon, *Ubuntu* leadership, from the point of view of Rwandan participants, without paying attention to pre-existing views on the subject (Groenewald, 2004). The design will therefore allow the researcher to describe the views and experiences of the participants through one to two hours of in-depth interviews (Taherdoost, 2022).

6.4. Population, sample, and sampling techniques

Population is a group of persons or objects that possess the characteristics that will be explored in research (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010; Thacker, 2020). The population of this study will be education stakeholders including officials of Ministry of Education, district officials, school leaders, teachers, learners, and leaders of Parents Teachers Association who are neither teachers nor school leaders in secondary schools in Rwanda. Rwanda is the target population because the major aim of this study is to explore the concept and practice of Ubuntu in the country, and to compare such practice to other countries in Africa where applicable. The listed stakeholders will be chosen because Ubuntu as a leadership philosophy entails the involvement and engagement of different stakeholders to achieve a common goal (Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2021; Fagunwa, 2019; Laloo, 2022; Nzimakwe, 2014). Secondary schools will be chosen because this level of education is pivotal to the economic growth of any nation since it equips learners with useful skills for contributing meaningfully to the society and for higher education (Nwakpa, 2017).

While sample is the subset of a population or the experimental units that are included as participants in empirical research (Noordzij et al., 2010; O' Leary, 2017), sample size is the number of participants required to achieve the objectives of a study (Del Aguila & Ramirez, 2014). The sample size for this study will be 36 participants selected from four high performing schools in Rwanda. According to Hennink & Kaiser (2022), 9-17 interviews are enough to achieve saturation in a qualitative study. So, a sample size of 36 is appropriate for this study. High performing schools will be chosen because it is assumed that performance is

enhanced by engagement and involvement of relevant stakeholders in the education sector. High performing schools are therefore more likely to demonstrate Ubuntu leadership practices, and so they can provide valuable insights that could aid in the development of a framework or model for Ubuntu leadership.

There are many metrics for measuring high performance such as academic performance, graduation rates, retention, enrolment, and attendance among others. However, the metric that will be considered in the purposive sampling is academic performance in Mathematics in National examination. Academic performance which indicates improved teaching and learning is easily measurable and easily accessible, and it indirectly affects other performance metrics, including stakeholders' wellbeing and social justice (Shahjahan et al., 2021). Mathematics is chosen against other subjects because the subject is viewed to be instrumental in the understanding of other subjects, making it one of the most important subjects for science and arts learners in secondary school curriculum (Alzahrani et al., 2017; Biswas, 2015; Seikano et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2016).

Based on the report of NESA (2023), public and government-aided schools in Huye district of Rwandan Southern province have shown continuous improvement in Mathematics in the last three years. So, the four high performing schools will be selected from this district, which is considered as the city of education, knowledge and cultural history (World Bank, 2017), by considering contextual nuances such as gender and school location. This means that mixed schools will be selected from both urban and rural areas in Huye. Schools in urban and rural areas will be chosen equally because of existing evidence in international (Chavan & Chavan, 2018; Van Maarseveen, 2021), regional (Sumida & Kawata, 2021), and local (Friedman et al., 2016) literatures that there is large rural-urban education gap in most countries with learners in rural contexts being more disadvantaged in meeting curricular standards than their urban counterparts. Four schools will therefore be selected from rural and urban areas equally. Additionally, due to gender nuances as identified by Lopez et al. (not yet published), mixed schools headed by male and female school heads will be selected equally.

The inclusion criteria are further highlighted in Table 1 below. Eight participants including two school leaders (head teacher and deputy head teacher preferably), two teachers, two students, and two parents who are members of the School Executive Committee (SEC) will be selected from each of the four high performing schools, while two Rwanda Basic Education representatives and two district officials of different sexes will equally be selected from Huye district. The target will be the Rwanda Basic Education representatives involved in supporting school leadership, District Director of Education (DDE) and the District Education Officer (DEO) for secondary education. Where the DEO is the same gender with the DDE, Sector Education Inspectors will be considered. There must be a balance in gender during the selection process. In addition, where both the school head and his/her deputy are of the same sex, other members of SEC will be considered. Preference will be given to school heads and their

deputies because they are the helm of affairs of leadership and management practices in their schools.

Table 1: Inclusion criteria

Factors	Condition for inclusion
Country	Rwanda
Province	Southern Province
District	Huye
Type of school	Government-aided and Public mixed school
Geographical location	Urban and rural in equal ratio
Participants	Rwanda Basic Education representatives, District officials, head teachers and deputy head teachers or other staff that are members of SEC, teachers, learners, and leaders of PTA that are not school leaders or teachers.

The selection criteria proposed for this study is based on purposive sampling. Such sampling is mostly used in a qualitative study to identify and select information-rich participants related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). The target will be teachers, students and parents/community members who are involved in school leadership such as school functionaries and members of Parents Teachers Association. This choice is informed by the assumption that those involved in school leadership will be better placed to provide valuable insights on the concept and practice of Ubuntu leadership.

The use of purposive sampling to select participants in a study is supported by Gentles et al. (2015) who opined that purposive sampling helps to select participants based on their knowledge with respect to the research questions posed in a study. In addition to selecting a group that will help to effectively answer the research questions posed in this study (Etikan et al., 2016), this technique is also suitable since there is limited time and resources for conducting this study, and the sample will be needed quickly (Oribhabor & Anyanwu, 2019). A description of the participants that will be selected for this study is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Description of participants

Participants	No.	Preferred Description	Optional description
School leaders	2	Male and female school head and deputy school.	Where they are the same sex, other staff that are members of SEC will be considered, with the

Participants	No.	Preferred Description	Optional description
			gender of the school head given preference over others.
Teachers	2	Male and female that are not part of SEC	Not applicable
Students	2	Head girl and head boy	Other male and female functionaries and/or students that are not involved in leadership
Parents	2	Male and female participants that are members of SEC and are neither teachers nor school leaders.	Not applicable
Total per school	**8**		
Education directors	2	They must male and female that are involved in directing education activities in Huye district	Not applicable
Rwanda Basic Education representatives	2	They must be male and female who are involved in policy development.	Not applicable
Grand Total	**36**		

6.5. Data collection instrument

In qualitative studies, data can be collected using various instruments such as interviews, observation, and document examination (Creswell, 2009). According to Korstjens & Moser (2018), researchers adopting phenomenological research design elicit the perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and experiences of their participants through face-to-face in-depth interviews. This study will therefore adopt this method of data collection in exploring the views of participants on USL. The instrument for data collection will be interview guide which is designed for different sets of participants Annex 1. Semi structured interview, which is designed in line with literature and research questions posed in this study, will be used to learn the opinions of the participants on *Ubuntu* school leadership. This will involve using pre-determined questions, whilst allowing the participants to flexibly talk about the views they will raise during the interview (Wahyuni, 2012).

Although semi-structured interviews provide detailed information for answering the research questions (Hall & Hall, 2004); it is expensive, time-consuming, complex to analyse, and could

lead to researcher bias (Cohen et al., 2007). The participants may also feel uncomfortable to discuss some of their views and experiences (Yin, 2009). The researcher will however mitigate these shortcomings by adhering to research ethics, using small number of participants, and analysing the exact data obtained from them. Other methods of interview such as telephone are becoming increasingly popular (Block & Erskine, 2012). However, this study will adopt face-to-face interview which creates a safe and comfortable atmosphere, allowing the interviewer to assess the facial expression, body language and other non-verbal cues of the interviewee (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Furthermore, focus group interviews will be considered for a group of the participants that may feel comfortable to discuss the subject of the study with the interviewer. Such interview involves a small group of people who are brought together to explore their attitudes, feelings, ideas, and perceptions about a topic (Denscombe, 2007). The researchers will consider interviewing similar sets of participants at the same time due to the high number of participants that will be interviewed within a short time.

Interviews will be conducted in English language which is the major language of instruction in Rwanda. However, a good number of learners and teachers are struggling to master and use English language effectively in Rwandan secondary schools (Nzasabimfura & Andala, 2022). Furthermore, parents who may not have a good command of English language will also be involved in this study. There will therefore be an option to conduct interviews in Kinyarwanda language to allow the participants to thoroughly express their views about this study. The researchers, through the assistance of VVOB, have engaged the services of one lecturer from the University of Rwanda, and an enumerator in Rwanda who will assist in conducting interviews in Kinyarwanda when required, and in translation of data obtained during interviews. The data collection specialists have already been provided with adequate information concerning the study, so that they can ask follow-up questions based on the responses of the participants. Furthermore, one of the researchers will always be on ground during data collection to assist the enumerator in crafting follow-up questions where necessary.

6.6. Data collection procedure

The first step towards data collection is gaining entry into the research site. This is a challenging process (Okumus et al., 2007) that involves entering the organisation where the participants are housed and ensuring that they agree to act as informants in the study (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). The researcher will obtain numerous permissions before entering the research site. First, an ethical clearance will be obtained either from National Ethics Committee with the assistance of VVOB, or from the University of Rwanda through the assistance of an academic staff of the university who is engaged in the study. Using the ethical clearance letter, the researcher will obtain permission from Huye district officials in Southern province through REB to collect data from secondary schools in the district. This approval

letter will then be used to obtain permission from the gatekeepers of the selected schools to request for permission to collect data. Afterwards, participants will be purposively selected for both the pilot and main study, and they will be required to sign an informed consent form before participating in the study.

Following successful entry into the research site, the next step will be to conduct a pilot study. Pilot study acts as an important rehearsal to the main study (Smit, 2010), and it helps to assess the research methodology for a study (Strydom, 2011). In addition to the 34 participants that will be purposively selected for this study, the researcher will select an extra participant for the pilot study. The extra participant will be used to test the research instrument and to also estimate the time that will be taken to conduct each interview to inform the main participants adequately. Both the main participants and the participant for the pilot study will be required to sign the informed consent form before proceeding to take part in the interview. The interview date, venue and time will be agreed by the researchers, enumerators, and the participants. The most preferred venue will be the schools of the participants since this study intends to explore their lived experiences in their natural setting.

Prior to the interview and as will be reflected in the informed consent form, the researcher will seek for permission to record the interviews using audio recorder. In addition to the voice recorder, the researcher will also take written notes to verify the recorded audio and to aid in data analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Recording the interview will be important because as it will help the interviewer to get a precise account of their conversation with the interviewees (Al-Yateem, 2012). The recorded interview will be translated where required and transcribed by the enumerator and lecturer to ease data analysis. Although these persons have the requisite skills for playing this role, the entire team will hold training/discussion on translation, transcription, and integration of non-verbal communications recorded during interviews, as suggested by Adeagbo et al. (2024), to ensure data quality. Furthermore, the transcribers will be involved in both the interview and transcription process which is viewed as empowering and impactful on research outcome since local terms and meanings enunciated will be captured (Adeagbo et al., 2024).

6.7. Data analysis procedure

Data analysis is the process of generating important information from raw data to answer the research questions posed in a study (Nowell et al., 2017). This study will adopt manual thematic data analysis strategy which is usually used in phenomenology to make meaning of the lived experiences of research participants (Creswell, 2013). It involves identification of themes or patterns within qualitative data set (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Such analysis is used to organize complex data by identifying themes through "*careful reading and re-reading of transcribed data*"(Dawadi, 2020, p. 62).

The steps that will be followed in manual thematic analysis in this study include organising and preparing the data collected from the participants; transcribing and sorting their responses; reading through the data several times and writing down questions, thoughts and reflections arising from the data; coding and categorizing data based on the language of the participants; and generation of themes based on the rearranged data (Creswell, 2009). The final step will be data interpretation which will involve the presentation of coherent themes using direct quotes of the participants, and in line with the research questions posed in this study (Nowell et al., 2017). These steps that will be followed in the analysis data in this study are in alignment with the five steps for thematic analysis in qualitative research proposed by Castleberry & Nolen (2018, p. 807) which include "*compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding*".

6.8. Data adequacy and trustworthiness

Data adequacy or saturation is a key driver for determining the quality of the findings of a qualitative study (Aguboshim, 2021). Saturation is the point where the collection of data about a phenomenon yields no further insights or emerging themes, but only confirms previously collected data (Bryant et al., 2007). To achieve data saturation in this study, the researchers and enumerators will ask the participants the same question (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Furthermore, each interview will be analysed after it is conducted since ensuring saturation is a continuous process of analysis that begins during data collection phase (Nascimento et al., 2018).

Data trustworthiness or rigor is the degree of confidence in the methods used for ensuring the quality of data and interpretation of findings in a study (Connelly, 2016). In a qualitative study, trustworthiness embraces several dimensions such as transferability, confirmability, dependability, and credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility deals with a study's congruence with reality, and it can be achieved by iterative questioning, rapport building, prolonged engagement, saturation, and triangulation (Nyirenda et al., 2020). In addition to saturation, credibility will be ensured in this study through prolonged engagement which will entail building rapport and trust with the participants over time, thereby allowing the researcher to gain in-depth insights of their experiences (Ahmed, 2023). Furthermore, the researchers will acknowledge the possibility of having personal biases and work towards avoiding these biases by maintaining an objective stance during data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Ahmed, 2023).

Transferability on the other hand is the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be transferred to other setting using other participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It has been ensured in this study by providing a clear detail of contextual information for this study, and by clearly articulating the sampling criteria and procedures (Ahmed, 2023). Dependability deals with ensuring that the data generated in research are relevant to the research context

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It will be ensured in this study by documenting the steps taken by the researchers thoroughly to allow for replication, and by maintaining records of decision made, including methodological changes, during the study (Ahmed, 2023). Finally, confirmability deals with ensuring that the findings of a study are reflective of the collected data and not derived from the views of the researcher (Tracy, 2013). Confirmability will be ensured in this study through peer debriefing and member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In peer debriefing, the main researchers, who are three in number, will review the findings separately to minimise bias, while member checking will allow the participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the research findings (Ahmed, 2023).

6.9. Ethical consideration/risk assessment

The relationship between the participants and researchers in this study can lead to several ethical concerns related to privacy, misrepresentations, openness and honest interactions (Sanjari et al., 2014). In this phenomenological study that will explore the concept and practice of Ubuntu leadership, the researchers will make numerous ethical considerations to ensure that the rights of the participants are upheld. These ethical considerations, which are very necessary because of the in-depth nature of this study (Mohd Arifin, 2018), include seeking permission, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, anonymity, voluntary participation, and protection from harm.

As previously highlighted in the data collection procedure, the researcher will obtain ethical clearance, permission letters, and informed consent from the participants before proceeding to data collection. An informed consent allows individuals to decide whether to be part of a study or not, and it provides them with necessary information about the study (Creswell, 2009). The informed consent in this study will highlight the purpose of this study, risks and gains related to taking part in the study, approximate time for the interviews, and permission to record the interviews.

While anonymity deals with ensuring that participants are protected, confidentiality deals with ensuring that their views and experiences are treated with secrecy (Davids, 2018). The participants and their responses will be kept anonymous and confidential by identifying the participants using pseudonyms. The four selected schools will be code named A-D while the school leaders (school head and deputy school head or another member of the SEC), teachers, parents/community members and students will be represented using SLH and SLD, TE1 & 2, PC1 & 2, and ST1 & 2 respectively. In school one for instance, the eight participants will be represented using SLHA, SLDA, TEA1, TEA2, PCA1, PCA2, and STA1 & STA2. Education directors will be represented using ED1 and ED2, while ministry officials will be represented using MO1 and MO2. The numbers, 1 & 2, will represent male and female genders respectively. Voluntary participation will also be ensured by upholding the right of the participants to participate willingly in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), and to withdraw any time they deem

necessary. Furthermore, the researchers will protect the participants from any form of harm by ensuring that the questions are carefully formulated to avoid emotional harm. They will also be duly informed that they have the right to refuse to respond to any question they are uncomfortable with, or to even withdraw from the study at any point.

6.10. Data storage and protection

Data management which encompasses record keeping, data sharing, data ownership, and data storage, is important in qualitative research and requires in-depth attention (Lin, 2009). Collected data, including voice recording and written notes will be stored securely by the researchers throughout the collection and analysis phase. Written notes will be locked physically in a container, while audio recordings will be encrypted and stored digitally. In short, the guidelines provided by Aldridge et al. (2010) will be followed to ensure the security of the qualitative data. These include use of passwords, encryption, managing storage and deletion, making back-ups, sending only encrypted data via the internet, and anonymisation which has already been discussed in the preceding sections. Data will only be accessible to the researchers involved in the study and will be retained only for the duration of this study. Since the researchers are in different countries, data will majorly be shared via WhatsApp messenger application since messages sent via the application are end-to-end encrypted (Odeibat et al., 2023). Of the five researchers involved in this study, two are based in Rwanda while one will travel to Rwanda for data collection. These three researchers that will be present in Rwanda are the data controllers. It will be necessary to share data with the other two researchers for the performance of a contract in the interest of the data subjects (Republic of Rwanda, 2021). To do this, the data controllers will enter into a written contract with the parties outside Rwanda to set out their roles and responsibilities towards ensuring compliance with the Rwandan data protection law (Republic of Rwanda, 2021). These roles and responsibilities include ensuring data are used for the purpose of this study, sharing encrypted information with the research team only and through WhatsApp platform, and ensuring that data presented in the findings are anonymised among others. Apart from the researchers that are directly involved in data collection and analysis, other persons will only have access to the coded data. Upon the study completion, collected data will be destroyed to ensure no further retention, while the reports will be presented using pseudonyms. Voice recording will be deleted from the digital storage media, while written notes will be shredded and burnt.

7. References

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