CHAPTER FOUR:
THE AFRICAN UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human.

(Tutu, 2004:25).

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Management practices and policies are not an entirely internal organisational matter, as various factors beyond the formal boundary of an organisation may be at least equally influential in an organisation's survival. In this study, society, which includes the local community and its socio-cultural elements, is recognised as one of the main external stakeholders of an organisation (see the conceptual framework in Figure 1, on p. 7). Aside from society, organisations are linked to ecological systems that provide natural resources as another form of capital.

As Section 3.5.13 shows, one of the most important limitations of the Balanced Scorecard model is that it does not integrate socio-cultural dimensions into its conceptual framework (Voelpel *et al.,* 2006:51). The model's perspectives do not explicitly address issues such as the society or the community within which an organisation operates. In an African framework, taking into account the local socio-cultural dimensions is critical for organisational performance and the ultimate success of an organisation. Hence, it is necessary to review this component of corporate performance critically before effecting any measures, such as redesigning the generic Balanced Scorecard model.

This chapter examines the first set of humanist performance systems, as shown in Figure 11, overleaf. The chapter discusses issues surrounding the African socio-cultural framework. The chapter gives some background on the African

Ubuntu philosophy, the significance of this philosophy in practice, some of the challenges of the African Ubuntu philosophy, and the overall contribution of the Ubuntu philosophy to the success of corporate management systems.

Figure 11: Corporate performance and the African Ubuntu philosophy
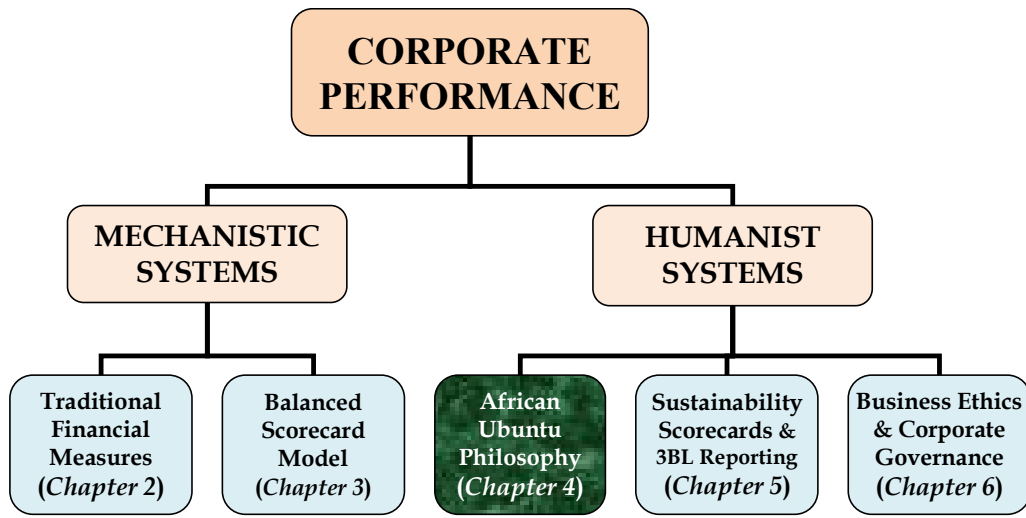
Source: Own observation

In view of the Ubuntu philosophy, the chapter also discusses external factors that affect internal organisational operations, for example, African culture and leadership styles, employees' social values, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which are deeply entrenched in African Ubuntu cultural systems. Knowledge about and the inclusion of these socio-cultural elements could act as a recipe for the successful implementation of an African management system, including a redesigning of the Balanced Scorecard model.

4.2   UNDERSTANDING THE AFRICAN UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

The word Ubuntu is derived from a Nguni (isiZulu) aphorism: *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which can be translated as "a person is a person because of or through others" (Moloketi, 2009:243; Tutu, 2004:25-26). Ubuntu can be described as the capacity in an African culture to express compassion,

reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Khoza, 2006:6; Luhabe, 2002:103; Mandela, 2006:xxv; Tutu, 1999:34-35).

The Ubuntu application is pervasive in almost all parts of the African continent. Hence, the Ubuntu philosophy is integrated into all aspects of day-to-day life throughout Africa and is a concept shared by all tribes in Southern, Central, West and East Africa amongst people of Bantu origin (Rwelamila, Talukhaba & Ngowi, 1999:338). Although the Bantu languages have evolved since the concept was first formulated, the meanings and principles of Ubuntu are the same in all these languages. Examples of the derivatives of the term in the Bantu languages are summarised in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Derivatives of 'Ubuntu' in Bantu languages

Ubuntu Derivative	Bantu Language	Source
Abantu	Uganda	Broodryk (2005:235)
Botho or Motho	Sesotho	Broodryk (2005:235)
Bunhu	Xitsonga	Broodryk (2005:235)
Numunhu or Munhu	Shangaan	Broodryk (2005:236)
Ubuntu, Umtu or Umuntu	isiZulu and isiXhosa	Broodryk (2005:236)
Umunthu	Ngoni, Chewa, Nyanja and Bemba (Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe)	Own observation
Utu	Swahili (Own: Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda)	Broodryk (2005:236) Own observation
Vhuntu or Muntu	Tshivenda	Broodryk (2005:236)

Source: Adapted from Broodryk (2005:235-236) and own observation

The application of the Ubuntu philosophy optimises the indigenous setting of an African organisation. The Ubuntu philosophy believes in group solidarity, which is central to the survival of African communities (Dia, 1992; Mbigi & Maree,

2005:75). An African is not a rugged individual, but a person living within a community. In a hostile environment, it is only through such community solidarity that hunger, isolation, deprivation, poverty and any emerging challenges can be survived, because of the community's brotherly and sisterly concern, cooperation, care, and sharing.

Nobel Prize winner and former president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, describes Ubuntu as a philosophy constituting a universal truth, a way of life, which underpins an open society (Mandela, 2006:xxv). The Ubuntu philosophy does not mean that people should not address themselves to a problem, but it does imply that they should look at whether what they are doing will enable or empower the community around them and help it improve. The Ubuntu philosophy also implies that if people are treated well, they are likely to perform better.

Practising the Ubuntu philosophy unlocks the capacity of an African culture in which individuals express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and communalities (Poovan, Du Toit & Engelbrecht, 2006:23-25). Respect and love amongst the community members play an important role in an African framework. The African view of personhood rejects the notion that a person can be identified in terms of physical and psychological features. Ubuntu is the basis of African communal cultural life. It expresses the interconnectedness, common humanity and the responsibility of individuals to each other (Koster, 1996:99-118; Nussbaum, 2003:21-26).

The above descriptions of the Ubuntu philosophy bring to light that an African society is, in general, humanist, community-based and socialist in nature. The Ubuntu philosophy therefore underpins any grouping within an African society. Such groupings include formal organisations that operate within local communities. Thus, the African Ubuntu philosophy can play a significant role in

corporate performance, as it influences the internal operations of an organisation that operates in an African environment.

4.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AFRICAN UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY FOR CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

The sections below discuss cases that show the profound significance of the Ubuntu philosophy in an African context. Some analyses are based on the researcher's personal knowledge and experiences gathered over the last forty years in the course of his African upbringing and associations.

4.3.1 The community is more important than an individual under the Ubuntu philosophy

The Ubuntu philosophy represents an African conception of human beings and their relationship with the community that embodies the ethics defining Africans and their social behaviours (Dia, 1992; Mbigi, 2005:75; Van den Heuvel, Mangaliso & Van de Bunt, 2006:48). Africans are social beings that are in constant communion with one another in an environment where a human being is regarded as a human being only through his or her relationships to other human beings (Tutu in Battle, 1997:39-43). Therefore, the survival of a human being is dependent on other people – the community and society.

There are several basic management principles derived from African tribal communities that embody this philosophy, including trust, interdependence and spiritualism (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). In the African management system context, the African Ubuntu philosophy represents humanness, a pervasive spirit of caring within the community in which the individuals in the community love one another. This Ubuntu approach plays a pivotal role in determining the success of any African organisation (Mangaliso, 2001:32). Ubuntu transcends the narrow confines of the nuclear family to include the extended kinship network that is omnipresent in many African communities. As a philosophy, Ubuntu is an orientation to life that stands in contrast to rampant individualism, insensitive

competitiveness, and unilateral decision-making. The Ubuntu teachings are pervasive at all ages, in families, organisations and communities living in Africa.

The Ubuntu optimises the African philosophy of respect and human dignity that is fundamental to being able to transcend ethnic divisions by working together and respecting each other (English, 2002:196-197; Poovan *et al*., 2006:22-25; Tutu, 1999:34-35). People who truly practise Ubuntu are always open and make themselves available to others, they are affirming of others and do not feel threatened that others are able and good. With Ubuntu, one has a proper assurance that comes with the fundamental recognition that each individual belongs to a greater community.

From the above literature review, it seems that, in an African framework, the community frame of reference is what an individual is defined and associated with. In Africa, the definition of an individual is community-based and not individualist. Anybody who does not identify him- or herself with the community is regarded as an outcast, which is contrary to Western ideologies. Thus, an African organisation must run its activities on the premise that community cares, and that the care of its members is paramount.

4.3.2 Positive behaviour is related to the Ubuntu philosophy

Behaviour in line with Ubuntu is identified as an individual's state of being, where the person's behaviour is governed by a ability to reason and think within the community context (Maphisa, 1994; Swarts & Davies, 1997: 290-296). Rational behaviour thus focuses on positive human values, such as love, sympathy, kindness and sharing. Respect refers to an objective and unbiased consideration of and regard for somebody's rights, values, beliefs and property (Eze, 2006; Tutu, 2004:26; Yukl, 2002).

Under African governance provisions, respect, dignity, caring and sharing are considered critical values that build African communities (Bekker, 2006; Eze, 2006; Poovan *et al.*, 2009). The fundamentals of sharing are prevalent in African

communities. The Ubuntu philosophy implies that one can only increase one's good fortune by sharing with other members of the society and thereby also enhancing their status within the local communities. Broodryk (2005:175) enumerates cases that show the human value behaviour of the Ubuntu philosophy, including visiting sick people who are not necessarily one's own relatives, sending condolences to a bereaved family, adopting an orphan as one's own child, providing food for needy people in the community, assisting the elderly in many different ways, and greeting others in a loving, friendly and compassionate way. The issues of corporate conscienceness, where equitable allocation and sharing of wealth is very African, have been recognised as a strategic theme relevant to the conceptual framework of this study.

Broodryk (2005:175) summarises the Ubuntu philosophy as representing various positive attributes, as indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Positive attributes and meanings of the African Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu attribute	African Ubuntu meaning
U- Universal	Global, intercultural brotherhood
B- Behaviour	Human (humane), caring, sharing, respect, compassion (love, appreciation)
U- United	Solidarity, community, bond, family
N- Negotiation	Consensus, democracy
T- Tolerance	Patience, diplomacy
U- Understanding	Empathy (forgiveness, kindness)

Source: Adapted from Broodryk (2005:175)

The above attributes of Ubuntu show that an African society, which is humanist in nature, is also more community-based and socialist than Western society. Socially, organisations may be motivated to train their employees using Ubuntu

as a philosophy, because doing so can help African organisations to develop a better understanding of African society and of their roles as an integral part (corporate citizens) of that society. The positive attributes of Ubuntu also demonstrate what an organisation can gain in terms of understanding the seriousness of embracing a corporate conscience that is in line with African society.

4.3.3 Synergies and competitive advantages arise under the Ubuntu philosophy

African organisations can build cooperation and competitive strategies by allowing teamwork based on Ubuntu principles to permeate the organisation (Mbigi & Maree, 2005:93). As a people-centred philosophy, Ubuntu stipulates that a person's worth depends on social, cultural and spiritual criteria. It requires a life that depends on a normative engagement with the community, a substantive appreciation of the common good and a constitutive engagement with one another in a rational and ethical community.

In this way, in order for a person to be identified as a true African, community and communality are substantive prerequisites. Communalism and collectivism are essential to the spirit of the African Ubuntu philosophy. Equally important in Ubuntu relationships is the aspect of working with others as a team (English, 2002:197; Poovan *et al.,* 2006:17). A spirit of solidarity simultaneously supports cooperation and competitiveness amongst the team by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the betterment of the entire group.

In a team setting, the existence of Ubuntu as a shared value system implies that team members are encouraged to strive towards the outlined team values, which consequently enhance their functioning together as a team (Poovan *et al.*, 2006:25; Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2006:48). The team is brought one step closer to being effective because of the increased level of team members' commitment, loyalty and satisfaction, which ultimately has a positive impact on overall performance. Thus, management systems that tend to focus on achievements of

individual team members and not the entire group are likely to miss out on all the social and collective framework of an African society.

Conversely, when a team is not intrinsically held together by all members, the consequences can be negative or sub-optimal. Sub-optimality occurs because each team member works towards different goals based on different value systems. This can result in dissatisfaction, a lack of productivity and commitment and a lack of teamwork or team spirit amongst team members (Poovan *et al.,* 2006:25). With such a scenario, it would be the task of the team leader to try to create an environment that is conducive to a team culture that appreciates the values of the Ubuntu philosophy.

Within an African society, oneness and sharing play a pivotal role in local communities and organisations – it is said in the Nyanja language that *Mu umudzi muli mphamvu* [unity is strength]. Community-based approaches also help to build synergies where the whole is more effective than the sum of individual parts. Under the Ubuntu philosophy, synergies are realised where the groupings are socially or culturally bound (Mangaliso, 2001:28-32; Prinsloo, 2000:275-285). The spirit of Ubuntu leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments, because the community is encouraged to participate, share and support all the team members (Regine, 2009:17-22; Van den Heuvel *et al.,* 2006:48). People can work together in community groups in order for them to be more productive, for example, they farm, construct roads, fish or fell trees together, while they are singing traditional songs as part of morale boosting. Thus, the community-based Ubuntu philosophy enhances productivity and organisational performance.

Through the Ubuntu philosophy, synergies create a great deal of competitive advantage for organisations from employees who practise this philosophy and their teams. An African organisation can gain competitive advantages on the basis of several business premises, including effective human relationships with others, language and communication, decision-making, time management,

productivity, age and leadership, and cultural beliefs (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993). Such business premises about the Ubuntu's contributions towards different areas of business perspectives is in conformity with English's (2002:203) argument that it is the spirit of Ubuntu that can give the African continent an edge and that will allow it to find a way forward. Within the redesigning processes of foreign ideologies, an African organisation must be localised in terms of its systems to respond to socio-cultural and environmental demands.

Overall, the above literature review shows that the Ubuntu philosophy conforms to a large extent with the understanding of the conceptual framework of this study in Figure 1 on p. 7. Culture and stakeholder relationships are regarded as one of the strategic themes of corporate performance. To facilitate all these relationships, there is a need for an effective communication system, which would be in line with the precepts of the Ubuntu philosophy. The importance of management decision-making and time management issues in facilitating productivity cannot be over-emphasised. The Ubuntu philosophy provides its own unique management perspectives, including ones on leadership.

4.3.4 African culture and leadership styles can be founded on the Ubuntu philosophy framework

Every geographic environment has its own distinguishing features, including culture. African culture is very different from Western cultures in some ways – this implies that in an African framework, social and cultural linkages are considered to be a key determining factor for the success of any organisation that operates on the continent (Broodryk, 2005; Karsten & Illa, 2005; Khoza, 1994; Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The implication of such concerns is that people must come first, before products, profits and productivity. Once people have been given priority and are treated well in their daily endeavours, productivity, products and profits should automatically be realised.

Afrocentricity encompasses African history, traditions, culture, mythology, and the value systems of communities, according to Khoza (in Mangaliso, 2001:278-279), the Chairperson of Eskom, the supplier of electricity in South Africa. Khoza believes that corporations in Africa will be successful if they adopt the Ubuntu management and leadership styles, which are people-centred. It is perhaps telling that Eskom registered an after-tax profit of R5.2 billion over a period of 15 months up to the end of March 2005 after the corporation had adopted the Ubuntu management philosophy (Broodryk, 2005:17).

Similarly, Wolmarans (1995:4) reports that South African Airways (SAA) adopted an Ubuntu management system in 1994. Since then, the African Ubuntu philosophy has been a driving force in the company. The secret behind its success has been the publicly stated core values of South African Airways – these include corporate performance, customer orientation, employee care, corporate citizenship, integrity, safety, innovation and teamwork, which are all embodied in the Ubuntu management philosophy. Improved results demonstrate that culture and leadership style play pivotal roles towards the achievement of set goals and strategies of an organisation.

Emerging African management philosophies see an organisation as a community and can be summed up in one word – Ubuntu (Mbigi & Maree, 2005:v-vi). An African Ubuntu management system recognises the significance of group solidarity that is prevalent in African cultures, acknowledging that an African leadership style involves group and community supportiveness, sharing and cooperation. Ubuntu-based leadership dictates sharing burdens during hard times, because by doing so, suffering is also shared and diminished. What is distinctive about the Ubuntu philosophy is the premise of a short memory of hate (Mazrui, 2001). Africans teach children to communicate effectively, reconcile, and find ways to cleanse and let go of hatred and give the children skills to do so. The Ubuntu approach to life enables people to express continued compassion and perseverance within communities and institutions.

The researcher observes that in Africa, when one is offended, both the offender and the offended are taken through a traditional court system. After the hearings and advice, the offender is usually told pay a fine, in the form of chickens, goats or cattle, to the offended party, depending on the gravity of the offence – it is a form of restorative justice. The Western judiciary system, which is a punitive system, largely punishes only the offenders by sending them to prison and neglects the offended party in the process. The traditional local judiciary system is both punitive and compensatory, in that the offender is punished and, at the same time, the offended party is duly compensated. In an African traditional court system, the leadership style is designed in such a way that it is reconciliatory as well. Through traditional local hearings, people unite and reconcile within a short time. Such a community-based approach to justice underpins an African leadership style that is founded on community love and solidarity.

However, African leadership that is grounded on compassion should use the Ubuntu philosophy with its original good intentions. Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005:158) observe that the application of Ubuntu should be in harmony with the democratic and good governance principles of a country. If these principles are not properly used, especially by politicians and public officials, claims of using Ubuntu in principle can create negative connotations if people say they are applying the philosophy whilst in fact their actual practice is divorced from the principles of democracy and good governance as enshrined in the statutes. For example, handouts to people who have not worked for what they get would not be part of the Ubuntu philosophy. The Ubuntu philosophy encourages people to work hard within their communities as a team.

4.3.5   African Ubuntu collectivism cultivates a team spirit towards work

Traditionally, African societies tend to be cohesive and productive, working together as one family in their social grouping. Studies that were done in Malawi and Tanzania confirm that amongst the most outstanding values in these societies is the salience of the group (An Afro-centric Alliance, 2001:59-74). The

group tradition or collectivism is so strong that generally Africans view success and failure as caused by traditional spirits that are controlled by the society. For example, before accepting any good offers, such as a promotion, an employee may seek traditional spells before deciding, or can even turn down the promotion altogether for fear of its social consequences. Any achievement or failure is taken as a group obligation – it belongs to the entire community.

In East and Central Africa, family remains, and is likely to remain, a centrepiece of collectivism. Using family metaphors may be regarded as one viable option in managing motivation in the workplace (Carr *et al*., 1997:906). If there are any multinational organisations in Africa that continue to promote individualist performance systems, there must be a need to articulate folk theories containing traditional accounts of achievements. The above literature review suggests that a wholesale introduction of individualist performance management systems may be socially and economically divisive and costly for any organisation based on Africa. This scenario could also be true with the generic Balanced Scorecard model applications within an African context. The social-cultural framework of an African society is pervasive, even within the management and among employees who have direct attachments with their society.

4.3.6 Ubuntu philosophy involves recognising an employee's socio-cultural values within an African context

The successful implementation of any plans and goals by the organisation can be realised only if the human resources component is rejuvenated to perform better. It is important that the spirit and morale of employees be renewed, apart from those of the business processes in order to realise the set goals and strategies (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The development of cooperative and competitive employees can be achieved through training and educating them on indigenous knowledge. Such training programmes can encompass critical areas such as patriotism and citizenship, which focus on the constant acquisition of different local skills and the best working techniques, based on Ubuntu and teamwork.

Apart from an emphasis on employee training and learning on the job, it is important for a company that employees uphold a number of values for them to be effective and productive. In the African context, employees' values emanate from African socio-cultural underpinnings. For example, employees have to be treated as human beings and not necessarily as programmed machines (Prinsloo 2000; Voelpel *et al.*, 2006). Employees have extended family systems that should be respected, and these systems may have an impact, for example, in terms of medical needs and funeral services.

When an individual is included in the community, that person begins to appreciate the idea of having an extended family system. The extended family system is not necessarily based on biological bonds, but rather on bonds of community solidarity (Poovan *et al.,* 2006:23). Seeing oneself as a part of an extended family provides one with an identity in African society. It is this identity that makes one realise that all people collectively share the same commonalities in life and need to do so positively to co-exist and survive.

A story is frequently told of a male employee who reportedly lost four fathers within the period of one year. For each funeral, the employee wanted financial assistance from his white employer. There was considerable misunderstanding between the two, as the employer insisted that one cannot have four fathers. The employee earnestly explained that his first father was one of his biological father's elder brothers, the second was one of his biological father's younger brothers, the third was his real (biological) father, and the last was the husband of his mother's sister. The employer was amazed at Africans' extended family systems. The story indicates how extended and community-based African society is.

Even in a working environment, the spirit of extended family systems is practised. In the workplace, there should be a family spirit if there is to be productivity (Broodryk, 2005:218). If all employees regard themselves as members of one extended family in the workplace, Ubuntu would apply in respect of personhood

or brotherhood (or sisterhood), and everybody would automatically be a member of this big family – an organisation.

In Eritrea, the extended family system is an important source of security, economic and social support in daily life, in sickness or old age, in cases of job loss and other societal events. It is the moral obligation of an Eritrean who has an income to support the poor, the aged and the needy within the family financially (Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006:150). This kind of moral obligation and support based on a person's conscience has even been enshrined in the Eritrean Constitution. It is stipulated in the Eritrean Constitution (Government of Eritrea: Article 22: 3) that

> Parents have the right and duty to bring up their children with due care
> and affection; and in turn, children have the right and the duty to respect
> their parents and to sustain them in their old age.

In Africa, the traditional heritage in many regions reflects the cultural norms of working together, developing a sense of co-operation, and helping one another in times of adversity and prosperity. Supporting the family is a symbol of solidarity and the interests of the family are always a priority (Mwenda & Muuka, 2004:143-158). Thus, if an organisation can function as a kind of community or family, similar employee values can be harnessed through the development of that sense of honour and good relationships with employees, as family members of the organisation. Fakude (2007:199) advises that even the most broad-based of economic empowerment programmes must emphasise good labour relations and best practices in that regard for both employers and employees. What a broad-based approach does is to take cognisance of the social context of economic development.

It is important to note the above African ideologies and the social obligations that employees are expected to meet. Such perceived social obligations can have a direct impact on corporate performance. The non-fulfilment of perceived

obligations (non-monetary) by organisations might cause employees to refrain from deploying their energies effectively in organisational processes. The perceived obligations by organisations can be conceptualised as "intangible liabilities", which represent the non-monetary obligations that an organisation must accept and acknowledge in order to avoid the depreciation of its intangible assets, such as intellectual capital and knowledge (Garcia-Parra *et al*., 2009:827).

The above literature review illuminates basic guidelines regarding issues affecting employee welfare in an African framework. The constitutional provisions in some countries illustrate the national importance attached to these values that employers should take cognisance of when engaging their employees. Employees need to be given conditions of service that are all-encompassing in terms of the community support that is required by all citizens, including employees. In African Ubuntu-based systems, community relations are made up of extended family systems, distant relatives and friends who all form a close-knit network of human beings of all ages.

In an African organisation, efficiency and competitiveness can be achieved by an emphasis on social well-being rather than on purely technical rationality. The Ubuntu philosophy propounds that employees' cultural values, which include extended family systems, medical and funeral arrangements, must be respected. However, the African employee welfare phenomenon is not fully represented in the generic Balanced Scorecard model, which advocates employee empowerment in the form of knowledge acquisition as a kind of human resources capital. The Ubuntu philosophy recognises the significance of treating employees as human beings and not necessarily as "programmed" human resources capital. The Ubuntu philosophy is imbued with respect for human beings, especially one's elders.

4.3.7 Respect is shown to one's elders under the Ubuntu philosophy

Apart from the usual organisational culture and individual personalities, the content and style of leadership is dictated by culture. In Africa, authority flows from the old to the youth, and respect for the elderly is a guiding principle. In corporate relationships, age is an essential element in Africa (Amoako-Agyei, 2009:333; Darley & Blankson, 2008:380). Thus, an older person is automatically expected to hold a certain level of superiority, regardless of his or her rank, title or education. Respect for one's elders, which is pervasive in all African societies, is one of the requisites that foreign corporations should include in their management systems; and this also applies to multinationals operating in Africa.

It is equally important to understand the social and management implications of respecting one's elders. For instance, in Africa, leadership is more likely to be accepted and is easier to respect when it comes from a more experienced and older individual than from young and apparently inexperienced individuals (Mangaliso, 2001:29). What this means is that it is very rare for a young man (and arguably even more difficult for a young woman) to be comfortable about assuming high office and leading a group consisting of older people who are regarded as senior to that young person. Equally, it would be awkward for older employees to take instructions from the young. This issue becomes especially complicated in a highly structured system such as the military, where compliance is a prerequisite and the leader is required to be more directive. However, respect for one's elders still remains a decisive feature of African society. Apart from respect for one's elders in particular, the Ubuntu philosophy also demands respect for the community in general, where individuals are expected to be socially responsible to their local communities and society at large.

4.3.8 Respect for the community and corporate social responsibility are part of the African Ubuntu philosophy

The African Ubuntu philosophy is displayed through compassion, where individuals express a sense of deep caring for and understanding of each other.

The Ubuntu approach allows team members to strive towards becoming caring, understanding and sharing (Poovan *et al.,* 2006:24). The compassionate approach enables team members to achieve a common goal. Through a common understanding, community members are able to help and care for each other as members of one family, as required in the humanist African Ubuntu approach towards the community and its members (Tutu, 2004:27). For example, the African Ubuntu philosophy, which is premised on community solidarity, demands that success of an individual should not be aggressively achieved at the expense of others as the purpose of the group existence is for communal harmony and well-being of all.

In line with the people-centric Ubuntu philosophy, individualism is not viable, for it is inadequate as a model to understand the basic human elements of a society (Khoza, 1994:4-9). By nature, humans are social beings and their wants and capacities are largely a result of society and its institutions. The most effective human behaviour is that experienced in the web of relationships people have with the groups, organisations, family and other bigger groupings that they belong to, such as the church, the state and other national and international organisations. African organisations have to understand this kind of relationship between their business activities and the social responsibilities that they have to meet.

The Ubuntu philosophy advocates community and engagement with the society that we live in. The communalism that the African Ubuntu approach preaches involves care for the community and society. This communalism involves wealth distribution among members of society (Prinsloo, 2000:283-284). In an African setting, a slaughtered cow is shared amongst the community members for their mutual benefit. This social responsibility can also be expressed in terms of harvesting only part of the crop from the field, leaving the rest to the less privileged, the poor, the sick, the elderly, the orphans or the destitute and

eventually to the birds of the heavens. Likewise, companies have a social responsibility to the community in which they are doing their business.

As social gratitude and a sign of respect for the elderly, and to encourage organisations to be more community-based and socially responsible, the Malawi Government has embarked on a number of socially-oriented projects, including the Bingu Silver-grey Foundation (BSF), which recognises the contributions of the elderly (those who are sixty and more years old) to society (FAO-Rome & BGF, 2008). The foundation was established in recognition of the fact that the Malawi population is ageing. Under this project, both the public and private sectors participate in achieving Bingu Silver-grey Foundation's institutional goals and its objective of understanding the challenges posed and faced by the elderly, and in turn appreciate and take advantage of the opportunities available. This initiative also ensures that companies show their corporate citizenship through involvement in such benevolent programmes, which are in line with the Ubuntu philosophy of respect, dignity, caring and sharing.

Meeting social responsibilities which are human-centred in nature is enshrined in the Ubuntu philosophy and has a positive impact on the long-term sustainability of communities and organisations. The philosophy also includes environmental protection, as human beings are considered to be part of creation (Broodryk, 2005:52-54). In Africa, there is considerable scepticism about the view that humans can be defined as lone beings, in terms of individual qualities. Instead, the view is that human being must be defined in terms of their environing physical community.

It is regarded as important to human survival that the natural environment upon which the community survives must be respected and protected. For instance, it may be acceptable in other societies to hunt wild animals with firearms for entertainment or as a pleasurable sport. Such a practice is not acceptable in Africa, since hunting is only excusable if it is done for the purposes of feeding people (Broodryk, 2006:20.

To be in conformity with Ubuntu principles, socio-cultural attributes should never be ignored in any African organisational management systems. Corporate social responsibility should be extended to the notion of ploughing back to the local communities within which corporations do business (Liker, 2004, Rossouw, 2010e). Corporations can do this in the form of financial assistance to the disadvantaged, through educational and health systems, donations in times of disaster, and the overall community maintenance of infrastructure and cultural values.

Generally, the caring and sharing concept that forms the core of the Ubuntu philosophy has now been recognised globally. Modern corporations now realise that they are part of the local communities within which their operations are conducted. The literature indicates that the inclusion of the Ubuntu philosophy into organisational systems would enable companies to be more responsive to the call for corporate social responsibility and good corporate governance.

4.3.9 Good corporate governance is made possible under the African Ubuntu philosophy

Issues of corporate governance are becoming more pronounced in modern business practices. Corporate governance, which is intertwined with business ethics, is considered critical in organisational practice, as well as in general corporate productivity (Rossouw, 2005:105). The founding principles of business ethics and corporate governance are in line with the Ubuntu philosophy of regarding all members of an organisation as part of the community. It is this direct involvement of and with community members that brings about greater solidarity, love, caring and sharing within a grouping (organisation).

A major governance challenge in current governance issues has been corruption, which reveals the moral depravity and badness of the perpetrators (Broodryk, 2005; Moloketi, 2009; Nyarwath, 2002). Generally, corruption is caused by a lack of commitment to moral beliefs by the perpetrators, which is in turn due to the weak moral will of an individual towards other people. Corruption can be seen as

a moral issue, where the perpetrators are fundamentally corrupt due to moral ignorance and confusion. Such a moral issue affects human life in a negative way where individuals abuse their personal and official powers (Broodryk, 2005:198). Corruption comes in different forms, which include nepotism, misuse of power, favouritism and bribery.

While corruption manifests itself in the relationship between individuals and institutions, as a practice, it is mostly rooted in the operations of market forces (Moloketi, 2009:239). Unlike the Ubuntu teaching, corruption is a pursuit of individual prosperity, as opposed to the common good of society. Corruption erodes the common fabric, undermines community and perpetuates poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. Ultimately, corruption leads to a rise in the blatant pursuit of individual gains.

When the awareness of moral rights and wrongs is strong, corruption can easily be rooted out. This is the principle behind the community-based Ubuntu philosophy. To curb corruption, for instance, the Ubuntu philosophy must be the essence of a value system that underpins a commitment to eliminate corruption (Moloketi, 2009:243, 247). There is also a need for strong robust democracies, where all sectors of society, including the media and organisations of civil society, the private sector, trade unions, traditional leaders and faith-based organisations have a responsibility to educate and promote the values of Ubuntu philosophy and anti-corruption.

The above observations indicate that there is much that the Ubuntu philosophy can contribute towards business ethics and good corporate governance issues. Under the African Ubuntu philosophy, people should be aware that individualism and greed, and profit achieved by sacrificing other community members, contravenes the true foundations of humanity (Ubuntu). The notion of Ubuntu or humanity teaches community solidarity, caring and sharing amongst the members of a community or organisation.

Overall, the literature also reveals the tremendous contribution that the African Ubuntu philosophy has made towards organisations in the form of its unique management style, which is pervasive in Africa. It would be necessary to include all considerations and contributions of the Ubuntu philosophy when redesigning the Balanced Scorecard model, as this study aims to do. However, consideration should also be given to the challenges that exist within an African society that would make successful implementation of the Ubuntu philosophy difficult to achieve.

4.4   CHALLENGES IN APPLYING THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

As with any other system, the Ubuntu philosophy and the African socio-cultural framework present some challenges. Most of the challenges that are reviewed below are based on my experience and my own observation as part of the African community. The findings of others who have researched this and related questions are referred to accordingly. The challenges of implementing an Ubuntu framework are discussed below.

4.4.1   The African Ubuntu philosophy is based on unrecorded practice

One major challenge of African indigenous knowledge is that it is not written down and that it is mostly transmitted from one generation to the next through storytelling (An Afro-centric Alliance, 2001). Successive generations learn about Ubuntu through direct interaction within local communities. Unlike the Western and Eastern ideologies, which are well documented, African philosophy does not have an ancient written tradition, which makes it very difficult for the younger generations to practise the African Ubuntu philosophy fully.

However, recently, a range of studies have been conducted in order to help people to understand and appreciate the Ubuntu philosophy (An Afro-centric Alliance, 2001; Broodryk, 2005; Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). Such studies will help to improve the documentation of African socio-cultural frameworks, enabling future generations to apply these ideas within

organisational management systems. However, thus far, there is little or no sensitisation and dissemination of information about the Ubuntu philosophy to the affected organisations in Africa.

4.4.2 There is insufficient information dissemination and sensitisation about the Ubuntu philosophy

Although the Ubuntu philosophy is associated with positive attributes, it is not well disseminated to people within African societies. Consequently, some people do not know anything, or know very little about its foundational concepts. This is even more pronounced in towns and suburbs in urban centres where different people with different socio-cultural backgrounds and without extensive and ancient family ties live together.

Western and Eastern cultures have documented their philosophies and have disseminated them into educational systems, but in business schools, for example, training is still based on foreign ideologies, and African theories are not taught. Thus, big business in Africa is still dominated by theories that were created within and for individualist cultures that do not match the communal culture of an African society (Lutz, 2009:317). Consequently, most people running an organisation in Africa fail if they do practise what they are taught in schools, especially at tertiary level (Western business theory), and are ill-equipped to practise anything else.

Therefore, it is high time that all stakeholders get involved in the dissemination of information about and sensitisation of people to Ubuntu philosophy. Such stakeholders would include educational systems, employers, media houses, government and the community. Cognisance should be taken of the fact that some of African traditional practices, customs and rituals are becoming obsolete in a changing modern environment.

4.4.3 The Ubuntu philosophy is negatively associated with some obsolete African traditional rituals, customs and practices

Some African traditions have outlived their usefulness in the modern environment, but may persist nevertheless. Practices such as witchcraft are still prevalent amongst African societies, and organisations need to take cognisance of this.

Other challenges in the African context include envy, where traditional practices tend to discourage individual initiatives (An Afro-centric Alliance, 2001:60-61), as Africans rate social achievement above personal achievement (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2006:48). Anybody who aspires to excel above the expectations of the community would be looked down upon as an alien. To counter this, *envy* has been characterised as an enemy to our common humanity in the Malawi national anthem's first stanza – it is described as one of the predominant enemies to personal and national development endeavours, apart from the other enemies that include hunger and disease (Malawi Government, 2010b):

> O God bless our land of Malawi,
> Keep it a land of peace.
> Put down each and every enemy,
> *Hunger, disease, **envy.*** (my emphases)

Witchcraft, envy and corruption, which are rooted in negative personal behaviours, deprive the very same community and its members endowed with the Ubuntu philosophy of their livelihood.

In the presence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, some African traditional rituals and practices should be considered irresponsible and outdated. These practices are found across Africa, in many ethnic groupings, under various names, but for the purposes of this discussion, the Chinyanja terms are used, with a brief explanation. I draw on my own knowledge of these practices in Malawi and South Africa. These include polygamy, where a man can have several wives.

Another obsolete practice is *kulowa fumbi* (levirate) which is still common among the Bantu people. *Kulowa fumbi* is practised where the brother of the deceased inherits the widow. The practice is intended to console the widow and assure her that she is still part of the family or community even in the absence of the husband. Unfortunately, the custom is practised without establishing the cause of death of the deceased, which could be related to HIV/AIDS.

Other problematic African traditions include *jando*, the unsafe circumcision practice for the young boys; *fisi*, practised where a family has problems in conceiving a child and another man is formally organised to have sex with the married woman whose husband cannot impregnate her; and *chidyerano*, practised where married couples exchange spouses as a symbol of togetherness.

In some cases, especially in the rural areas, the above African traditions and practices are continued in good faith, but unwittingly endanger the very existence and sustainability of the communities concerned. Fortunately, governments are taking initiatives in sensitising these communities on the woes that can arise from some of these African practices through the print media, radio and television.

However, the African Ubuntu philosophy is also facing challenges in its application due to the proliferation of new foreign ideologies in the multi-cultural African societies.

4.4.4   The African Ubuntu philosophy is challenged by the proliferation of foreign ideologies

The Ubuntu philosophy articulates such important values as respect, human dignity, compassion, solidarity and consensus, which demands conformity and loyalty to the group. However, modern African society is constituted of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Thus, understanding and practising some of the principles of Ubuntu have become problematic, due to multicultural challenges.

For instance, recently, Malawi has been at the centre of a controversy on gay marriage and rights. Two men, Mr Steven Monjeza and Mr Tiwonge Chimbalanga, arranged to wed, but were arrested on 28 December 2009. Although a gay lifestyle and gay marriages are acceptable in some societies, both practices are still considered taboo in the Bantu culture and gay marriage is a criminal offence under the Malawian statutes. The couple were charged with "gross indecency and unnatural acts" contrary to the laws of Malawi. In passing judgement, the following observation was made by Chief Magistrate Judge Siwasiwa (Malawi Government, 2010a; BBC, 2010b):

> The engagement and living together as husband and wife of the two accused persons, who are both males, transgresses the Malawian recognised standards of propriety since it does not recognise the living of a man with another as husband and wife. Both these acts were acts of gross indecency.

When the two men were imprisoned for 14 years, there was an outcry from international bodies, including the NGOs, governments, human rights groups, religious groups, and international organisations, including the United Nations (BBC News, 2010c). After the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, intervened by visiting Malawi, the prisoners were pardoned on 28 June 2010 by the President of the Republic of Malawi, Dr Bingu wa Munthalika.

This case is symptomatic of a recognition of larger forces that are having an impact on the Ubuntu way of life. Within the multi-cultural environment of African urban society, the synchronisation of the Ubuntu philosophy with some aspects of foreign cultures poses a great challenge to the upholding of principles and beliefs governing traditional African society.

The following section reviews literature on the indigenising of corporate management systems to address African socio-cultural dimensions.

4.5 CASES ILLUSTRATING THE AFRICANISATION OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

As noted in the section on stakeholder approach to management (Rossouw 2010b:20-22; see Section 2.2) and also the section on the inclusion of the community and the African Ubuntu philosophy as an integral part of the conceptual framework of this study (see Section 4.3.1), issues of culture are foundational to any management performance system. This section reviews and analyses literature on the African Ubuntu philosophy and how the philosophy can be used to align corporate performance within the African context that the study is designed to serve.

In the past, most business executives and government officials believed that aspects of management theories developed in the West may apply to the African context without any modifications. Indeed, there is still considerable confidence by management scholars and executive managers in using Western cultural management models in African countries (Ghebregiorgis & Karsten 2006:145; Gray, Shrestha & Nkasah, 2008:52). The use of such foreign ideologies is misplaced, in that Africa has a different socio-cultural framework altogether. Therefore, the adoption of foreign practices should be contingent upon the contextual cues on the circumstances of the society concerned.

It has also been established that local socio-cultural ideologies can hinder or facilitate the implementation of any foreign concepts and practices (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2004:109; Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006:144-163). To a large extent, management tools are congruent with the local briefs and ideologies in the society of their origin. To some extent, locally developed management models tend to be aligned with the specific beliefs of the local society in question. Thus, the socio-cultural assumptions of a management model transferred from one place to another may be more, or less, consistent with the ideologies of the target society.

Africa needs to build its own Africanised workforce for the continent to create organisational and national values (McFarlin *et al*., 1999:68-69). Organisations will fail if they do not move quickly to Africanise their management efforts. The universal adoption and implementation of foreign ideologies that do not fit into the African context has been a main cause of many corporate failures operating in Africa (Gichure, 2006:39).

The above literature indicates that a wholesale adoption of foreign theories should be avoided and that adaptation of such theories must be encouraged to promote productivity and performance. The use of management theories and practices should be contingent on the societal underpinnings of the environment within which an organisation operates. Furthermore, business managers in multi-national companies should always seek compromise and strike a balance to target the different environmental settings of the different communities in which they operate, together with their different socio-cultural frameworks. Based on this understanding, it would be necessary to conceptualise the African beliefs and socio-cultural values in order to adapt the Balanced Scorecard model framework.

Kamoche (2002:995) presents a similar argument, asserting that there is a great need to identify the characteristics of management systems in Africa, the diversity and adequacy of approaches currently in use and how these might be affected by the key contextual factors. African culture differs from other cultures in that Africans construct different meanings from Western cultures, they negotiate different social and cultural contexts, and they make sense of their own environmental underpinnings (Ahiauzu, 1986:37-58).

International as well as domestic business managers gain a more informed understanding of the local cultural environment. Through such interactions, managers are guided in their decision-making processes (Gray *et al*., 2008:52). Thus, a multinational company manager has to interact with many cultural groups with different value systems whose perceptions of foreign presence vary widely

from those of the foreign company. In compliance with the socio-cultural demands, multinational companies need to think beyond their domestic environments when formulating their global strategies and more especially when forming business partnerships in Africa (Koku, 2005:17). Foreign companies are required to first understand and appreciate the socio-cultural realities of the African continent that operate largely under the Ubuntu philosophy.

A body of research in Africa, by An Afrocentric Alliance (2001), elucidates the vitality of contextual factors, including national and organisational cultures that may have a determining effect on the design and diffusion of management theories, policies and practices. African culture is unique in promoting the reciprocity principle (Darley & Blankson, 2008; Tayeb, 1998:335-6). To be effective, one requires a clear understanding of the African context, including the historical, legal, educational, economic and competitive factors that influence corporate operations.

Given the need to change and the limitations of Western management development models, African countries need to develop their own unique approaches that are appropriate to their respective environments (Binedell, 1994:3-14). There must be proper identification of the African indigenous philosophies and values that underlie the African framework. Under this argument, it is expected that new management development models that are designed must be tested and validated in order for them to be useful tools in the African setting.

Social linkages are quite pertinent in the corporate world. Cultural and social linkages determine how an organisation interacts with its stakeholders, including customers. Even within the national framework, Klemz, Bushoff and Mazibuko (2006:590) found that in South Africa large multinationals are primarily individualist in their cultural orientation and therefore are more likely to drive what they describe as "non-humanistic" aspects of service delivery to their customers. By contrast, the small black-owned businesses are more collectivist in their

cultural orientation and therefore use humanist-type variables as a basis of their competitive strategy. Although black people are employed by large, traditionally white-owned, corporations, their work-related behaviour is shaped by the prevailing cultural orientation of the owners and managers of those organisations through training and socialisation.

There is a need for the Africa-based business practices to be consistent with the cultural concepts of the Ubuntu philosophy. In respect of customer care and satisfaction, small retail shops in South Africa are encouraged to supply empathetic and caring service because of its strong influence on black township residents' willingness to buy (Klemz *et al.*, 2006:605). Within an African context, in the long term, organisational goals and strategies are achieved when a compromise is found between different socio-cultural parameters and they are fused into the national and organisational frameworks. Therefore, it is in an organisation's best interests to move beyond just window-dressing and the empty rhetoric of the past towards an approach to management development that reflects Africa's unique context (McFarlin *et al.*, 1999:76). African organisations and projects need to re-align themselves to the true African context and a not Western setting in order for them to be economically and socially viable.

However, the African management theories can take a leaf from some of the Western management theories, as they contain some universal truths. For instance, in Africa, some people keep "African" time, where indigenous managers tend not to attach much value to time keeping (Lutz, 2009:318). The universal business truth is that wasted time results in decreased productivity. There is, however, a need to discriminate between theoretical elements that can enrich a management theory based on the Ubuntu philosophy and elements that cannot.

When developing the African management theories and practices, principles and concepts of the Ubuntu should be incorporated, as the philosophy emphasises the need to harness the desire for solidarity among the African people (Mbigi & Maree, 2005:vii–viii). Therefore, it is important for organisations based in Africa to

adopt some Western and Eastern management techniques that can enable them to attain competitive advantage, but they need to do so taking into account the African context.

The significance of and challenges in applying the African Ubuntu philosophy are summarised in Table 6, below.

Table 6: Significance of and challenges in implementing the Ubuntu philosophy

Significance of the African Ubuntu philosophy
1. Community is bigger than an individual under the Ubuntu philosophy
2. Positive behaviour is related to the Ubuntu philosophy
3. Synergies and competitive advantages arise under the Ubuntu philosophy
4. African culture and leadership styles can be founded on the Ubuntu philosophy framework
5. African Ubuntu collectivism cultivates a team spirit towards w
6. Ubuntu philosophy involves recognising an employee's socio-cultural values within an African context
7. Respect is shown to one's elders under the Ubuntu philosophy
8. Respect for the community and corporate social responsibility are part of the African Ubuntu philosophy
9. Good corporate governance is made possible under the African Ubuntu philosophy

Challenges towards the African Ubuntu philosophy
1. The African Ubuntu philosophy is based on unrecorded practice
2. There is insufficient information dissemination and sensitisation about the Ubuntu philosophy
3. The Ubuntu philosophy is negatively associated with some obsolete African traditional rituals, customs and practices
4. The African Ubuntu philosophy is challenged by the proliferation of foreign ideologies

Source: Own observation

The above literature review confirms that it has become imperative that cultural analysis be grounded in the local geographical environment, taking cognisance of different historical experiences, socio-demographics, internal politics, and

other socio-cultural forces prevalent in the local areas within an African context. International partnerships and collaboration can be reached through consultation and consensus within the African framework. This means that foreign corporations should pay attention to issues surrounding local relationships and socio-cultural ideologies.

The above lessons about African socio-cultural frameworks are significant for organisations based in Africa. Managers need to be more dynamic in addressing the foundations of an African society, namely the Ubuntu philosophy. To become a stable and successful competitor in both local and global economies, an organisation should strive to embrace new management models that are consistent with the local socio-cultural frameworks that apply where the organisation operates. The universal adoption of a foreign model without any adaptation is likely to be a mismatch with African society and may ultimately not succeed. Thus, there is that need to redesign the Balanced Scorecard model to accommodate African socio-cultural frameworks founded on the Ubuntu philosophy. Apart from facilitating the redesigning process of the Balanced Scorecard model, the African Ubuntu philosophy can make many positive contributions to local and global management principles and practices.

4.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY TO THE CORPORATE WORLD

There are positive aspects of African systems which could be adopted to enhance the corporate performance of local and international organisations. The sections below discuss the general contributions that the Ubuntu philosophy can make to the corporate world, and how they can do so.

4.6.1 Promotion of the Ubuntu philosophy management systems

Observations about the unique Afro-centric systems show that a new model must be developed for organisations in Africa in order to realise better value creation. Managers need in-depth cross-cultural values for their organisations to penetrate

African marketplaces successfully (Amoako-Agyei, 2009:339). Thus, a model can be developed and implemented taking cognisance of the teachings of Mbigi and Maree (2005), who advocate an *Ubuntu-based approach to African management systems*. The development process must evolve through several distinct phases in order for it to be successful.

The first phase involves the *creation of a learning community*. In an African set-up, the use of ritual and ceremonies is vital, as they enhance the bonding for building a foundation and solidarity and promoting group learning. The learning process is a significant factor in achieving better organisational processes and performance (Mbigi & Maree, 2005).

Secondly, the *strategic planning process* must be instituted. This second phase would involve representatives of all constituencies in an organisation. Strategic visioning and values exercises have failed in the past because of their lack of a spiritual dimension (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). Again, ritual and ceremony are central, particularly the role of storytelling. Especially important are traditional survival stories that can subsequently be linked to the company's future activities and outlook. Storytelling is part of how African indigenous knowledge is passed on across generations.

The next phase is the *strategy sharing*, which entails the involvement of the entire organisational workforce in fora that are designed to share corporate strategy, suggestions and receive inputs (Khoza, 2006; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The sharing of corporate objectives and strategies could involve a series of meetings with employees from different levels, functions and racial groups. The sharing of strategies increases ownership and later reduces resistance to change. Ultimately, strategy implementation becomes easier.

Finally, the last phase requires *participative skills building* with mentors who emphasise close, trustful and helpful relationships (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). This phase encourages trainees to be self-empowered and become authors of their

own identity. One needs to consider and comprehend different factors that are constantly working in an African society for the mentoring process to be effective. For instance, it is not appropriate to apply the Western type of mentoring to Zimbabwean organisations, because of differences in socio-cultural values and beliefs (Manwa & Manwa, 2007:41). The significance of mentoring and its impact on attendants' performance ultimately affect their productivity and overall corporate performance (English, 2002:197-203).

It has also been established by English (2002:197-203) that through the mentoring process, people who attend and participate in indigenous knowledge training programmes cooperate across local cultures more efficiently than those who do not attend and participate in such training programmes. Furthermore, Mphuthumi Damane, a former chief executive officer of Nuclear Energy of South Africa, recommends that every manager in South Africa be required to pass a course on Ubuntu management in the same way as all managers have to understand basic financial management (Damane, 2001:34). It can therefore be observed that human resources development is a prerequisite for any successful strategy development and the implementation of the plans of an organisation based in Africa; and that the Ubuntu philosophy should be part of it.

4.6.2 Utilisation of African social capital

Generally, the corporate world can use Africa's uniqueness and social capital to build on corporate performance. Social capital, which constitutes an organisation's emotional and spiritual resources, is a distinctive competitive factor, like intellectual capital (Mbigi, 2000:16-21; Ngunjiri, 2010:765). Social capital affects the impact of any strategic intervention and the ultimate effectiveness of policies, procedures and processes. However, the current corporate practices, management thinking, and literature are weak in managing and using emotional and spiritual resources, which also help to determine the value of an organisation in Africa.

It would be important for people to think through and know who they are socially and culturally, why they are, and what they can become (Binedell, 1994; Mbigi, 2000; Moloketi, 2009). Social capital can, for example, be acquired through collective dancing, singing, drumming and storytelling, as well as mythography, a technique that requires the facilitator to capture the collective story of the group in the form of a heroic mythology with distinctive events and characters to dramatise the message (Broodryk, 2005; Mbigi, 2005; Mwenda & Muuka, 2004). The ritual elements of workshops can be as important as the content and discussions of the groups. It is worth noting that in Africa, the dominant spirits determine the organisation's outcomes, consciousness, conscience, culture and energy levels, which ultimately determine corporate performance. The belief in good relationships and communication within community members is also critical in the African Ubuntu philosophy.

4.6.3   Effective communication and public relations

Communication and effective control systems constitute a significant component of a successful organisation (Neely, 1998, 1999). In an ancient Afro-centric conception of the Ubuntu philosophy, communication is reflected in various African traditional forms that regard communication as directly connected by the underlying concept of communalism (Mersham & Skinner, 1999). Within such underlying elements, community members effectively communicate on various aspects for the survival of the community.

The other useful attributes of Afro-centric systems include the reciprocity and mutuality of human relations that emphasise the belief that respect should always be reciprocated. Reciprocity underlies the *Ubuntu* phenomenon, where one only becomes a person through one's relations with others, thereby creating harmonious world relations with others. This also forms part of the ancient African philosophies that relate to communication (Skinner & Mersham, 2008:251). These aspects of the African philosophy may explain why public relations theorists and practitioners increasingly find African public relations

intriguing, posing challenges to accepted normative approaches, as they seek a conceptualisation of a sustainable new global model of management.

4.6.4   Global transformation based on the African Ubuntu philosophy

There is a lot that the African community can contribute towards itself in particular and to the world in general. Organisational transformation is not just an intellectual journey – it is also an emotional and spiritual journey (Khoza, 2006; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). In order to access the emotional and spiritual resources of an organisation, appropriate bonding symbols, myths, ceremonies and rituals are needed. With this understanding, the Ubuntu literature suggests that Africa can provide a unique contribution to the global practice in many management systems that revolve around Ubuntu, as propagated by Steve Biko (in Coetzee & Roux, 1998:30):

> We believe that in the long run, the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationships. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face.

The Ubuntu philosophy which is founded on the African framework has applicability on a global scale because of its values that are based on human relationships. Such values as solidarity, compassion, generosity, mutuality and commitment to community can find resonance well beyond Africa's borders (Ngunjiri, 2010:765). It is based on this notion that the Ubuntu philosophy has spread its wings worldwide. Former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, embraced the Ubuntu philosophy when on 28 September 2006 he told the Labour Conference in the United Kingdom to embrace Ubuntu (BBC News, 2006):

> **All you need is Ubuntu**. Society is important because of Ubuntu. If we were the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most wealthy, the most

powerful person – and then found all of a sudden that we were alone on the planet, it wouldn't amount to a hill of beans.

The African Ubuntu philosophy has also been acknowledged and accepted by the US Department of State. When she was sworn into office on 18 June 2009, Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, the Secretary of State's Special Representative for Global Partnerships, expounded on the concept of Ubuntu philosophy (US Government, 2009:n.p.):

> The concept of Ubuntu dates back centuries and appears in various forms in traditions throughout the world; and yet globalization has heightened our awareness of this interconnectedness. In the same way that Secretary [Hillary] Clinton has often said that *It takes a village to raise a child*, we are now realizing that we must apply a similar approach worldwide. This is the Ubuntu Diplomacy where all sectors belong as partners, where we all participate as stakeholders, and where we all succeed together, not incrementally but exponentially

Thus, the African Ubuntu philosophy has a global impact in corporate management systems. With globalisation, the modern management regards the firm as a community and not just as a collection of individual entities (Lutz, 2009:313). Therefore, an Ubuntu global philosophy will make managers understand the purpose of management as a tool for promoting the common good of all the stakeholders of an organisation.

The literature analysis on the African Ubuntu philosophy underscores the significance of Africa's unique socio-cultural framework, which has a direct impact on the performance of an organisation based in Africa. In an African society, community is paramount and society is founded on the Ubuntu philosophy, which is community-based and socialist in nature. The inclusion of the African social-cultural framework would be a basic step towards redesigning the generic Balanced Scorecard model.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed and analysed literature on the African Ubuntu philosophy, considering its implications for management and thus for its inclusion in formulating corporate frameworks for organisations in Africa. The chapter gives the background on the Ubuntu philosophy and how it can be linked up with performance measurement theories for organisational success. One of the profound lessons on Ubuntu is that it integrates African organisations with the local communities. The reviewed literature also reveals that organisations are able to realise synergies through communalism and collectivism that arise from the Ubuntu principles.

Based on the Ubuntu philosophy, there are several external factors that automatically affect organisational internal operations. Such external factors include African culture and leadership styles, business ethics and good corporate governance, employees' socio-cultural values, including extended family systems, and corporate social responsibilities. The chapter also analysed some challenges impinging upon the applications of the Ubuntu philosophy. Finally, theories suggesting the successful implementation of Afro-centric management systems have also been analysed.

In general, within the Ubuntu philosophy, the importance and value of the human being (*munthu*) and the community are pivotal. The practices of the Ubuntu philosophy with regard to humanity, care, sharing, teamwork spirit, compassion, dignity, consensus decision-making systems and respect for the environment are all positive elements that could make a contribution towards the improvement of corporate performance. The literature in fact indicates that there is now a global shift in management thinking which is now taking note of the Ubuntu philosophy.

The chapter has also reported on the literature review which highlights the need for management systems to be realigned with the local Ubuntu philosophy that defines the African socio-cultural framework to be a successful organisation in

Africa. Thus, the Ubuntu philosophy attributes, as discussed above, would constitute an indispensable input towards the redesigning process of the Balanced Scorecard model. *All we need is Ubuntu*.

The next chapter reviews sustainability issues and how these would be incorporated into corporate frameworks. Apart from the economic and social dimensions that have been reviewed previously, natural environmental (ecological) issues are also important, because ecological systems provide raw materials to industries and the community, for production and consumption respectively. Thus, corporations have to run their activities taking into consideration the sustainability of operations for the current, and more especially future, generations.