

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leadership Skills and Public Policy Priorities for Inclusive and Resilient Africa: *An Integrated Ubuntu Perspective*

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Abstract

This paper utilizes the 2014-2016 Ebola virus disease outbreak as a case study to examine how leadership skills and public policy grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu can drive inclusive and resilient public policy choices and priorities in Africa. Using a multi-disciplinary perspective that intersects leadership, human resources management, organizational design, philosophy, anthropology, political science and change management models, the research introduces the Ubuntu Leadership Onion and a five-pillar leadership skills framework that serves as a practical tool for developing leaders focused on community, empathy, impact, courage and stakeholder value. The paper submits that values-based leadership paired with cohesive organizational design and meaningful community engagement builds institutional strength in public policy priorities and decision choices. The study concludes that Ubuntu leadership skills, enriches human resource management and public policy with culturally grounded insights and demonstrates how authentic African values can shape inclusive and resilient public policy.

Keywords: Leadership, Ubuntu, Public Policy, Organizational Design.

1. Introduction

The Sustainable development goals (SDGs) aims to guide African leaders to focus on policy choices that enable their citizens to realise their full potential. Some of the notable ones include SDGs – 3 health& well being, 4-education, 5- gender equality, 6 – Water sanitation hygiene, 8- decent work 10-addressing gender inequality, 11 sustainable human settlements and cities, & 16 peace, justice & strong institutions. African citizens fueled by a youthful population are increasingly holding the feet of leaders to the fire to ensure a focus on social, economic and human rights in order to build resilience and inclusive governance systems. Africa has a youthful population. Sixty percent (60%) of Africa's population are under twenty five years of age. Seventy percent (70%) are under the age of thirty years. With a population of 1.59billion people, Africa accounts for 19.1% of global population. The context is complex and what Africa needs is leadership skills that can drive public policy choices to promote inclusive and resilient growth.

This study aims to examine how the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic was managed from a leadership framework and will argue that the leadership skills and organizational model that was demonstrated during the epidemic can be replicated to drive a more inclusive and resilient public policy choices by African leaders.

2. Research Question and Propositions

In view of the above context, our study seeks to answer the following question:

1. What are the leadership skills and public policy priorities needed to position Africa for inclusive and resilient growth in the light of the current triggers for change?
2. What leadership and institutional redesign skills does Africa require for resilient growth?

To do so our study's proposition is that:

To position Africa for Inclusive and resilient growth, Africa Needs Leaders who have:

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- a. Organizational Redesign Skills anchored on Ubuntu and knowledge management
- b. Multi disciplinary mind-set to diagnose, design, implement and evaluate effective humanity centered public policies that creates jobs, peace, prosperity and resilient growth for Africa.

The study will examine the EVD outbreak in Sierra Leone as a case study to address the research questions and also test the research propositions.

3. Literature Review

Many researches have been conducted to examine the management of the Ebola Virus disease outbreak in Sierra Leone from 2014-2016. Kimura et al (2015) did a comprehensive literature review focused on the epidemiology, clinical features, diagnosis, and treatment of EVD. Beeching et al (2014) focused on a clinical review of the disease. Kanneh and Shaacke (2014)'s work examined the history of previous epidemics and described the structure and genetics of the ebolavirus and reviewed current understanding of viral vectors and the latest treatment practices. The study concluded on the need to focus on global monitoring systems and a multi-disciplinary approach to dealing with the management of the disease. It concluded that adequate scientific research and preparation, backed by careful policy implementation, are likely the key to limiting and responding effectively to future epidemics. Delamou et al (2017) concluded that empowerment and capacity building at the community level are key to countries' preparedness to face future epidemics. Shagari (2016) performed a meta-analysis to determine the role of preparedness in the course of the epidemic. The study results revealed that a lack of preparedness substantially contributed to the scale of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and concluded that effective health care systems and procedures for early detection and containment of outbreaks, in combination with education of the population will be needed to better control future Ebola outbreaks.

None of the researches we reviewed specifically focused on the impact of leadership skills and its effect on the successful management of the disease. This study addresses that gap by focusing on leadership skills by applying Ubuntu philosophy as a framework to analyse the demonstration of key leadership skills during key moments of the epidemic.

3.1 Leadership

As a science, art and practice, leadership has gained the attention of numerous researchers and practitioners worldwide. Leadership is one of the oldest practices

in human resources management. Based on practice, the leadership-as-practice approach recognizes the importance of "everyday activity, performances, and interactions, that is the doings of leadership" (Crevani and Endrissat, 2016, p.31). Leadership-as-practice orients people to "what is internalized, improvised and unselfconscious" (Carroll, et al., 2008, p.374) and is "less about what one person thinks or does and more about what people may accomplish together" (Raelin, 2016b, p.3). Thus, the practice of leadership is intrinsically linked with its context (Raelin, 2016a). For example, the leadership-as-practice approach considers leadership as appearing as a practice whereas the trait approach puts accent on the leader. Leadership-as-practice is mainly concerned with "where, how, and why leadership work is being organized and accomplished" (Raelin, 2011, p.196). There are definitions that consider leadership as a behaviour (Richards and Engle, 1986), others as a process (Barker, 2001), influence (MacArthur, 2004), power (Janda, 1960) or an ability (Robbins, 1998). Northouse (2013) identified the following four common themes: 1. Leadership constitutes a process. 2. Leadership involves influence. 3. Leadership appears in a group context. 4. Leadership implies goals attainment. Therefore, the development of leadership theory represents the output of a long and significant effort emerging from a multidisciplinary perspective (Goethals and Sorenson, 2006).

3.2 Inclusion and Leadership in Public Policy and Human Resources Management

Inclusion is defined as a condition where "people of all identities and many styles can be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members" (Ferdman 2017, 235). Rising inequities in increasingly diverse societies have led to a demand for heightened consideration of social equity in public services to correct existing imbalances and achieve fair and just treatment for all (Cepiku and Mastrodascio 2021). Research in public administration has documented how citizens who belong to social identity groups that have a history of discrimination (women, people of color, young persons, individuals with disabilities, older adults, religious minorities, immigrants, people with accents, etc.) are more likely to experience various forms of exclusion in their interactions with public services.

The importance of the need to address inclusivity in human resources management and leadership in public policy decision making is also linked to the deontological moral theory of human rights and goodwill. According to the prominent philosopher

Immanuel Kant, deontology refers to an obligation or duty. Misselbrook (2013). This theory depends on the intention or will of an act and not on the consequences. In that sense and linked to inclusive talent management practices within organizations and institutions, an action is right if add only if it is done in accordance with duty. A duty is constituted by the goodwill or is dependent on, if it is represented or motivated by goodwill. It also means you treat people as intrinsic ends and not as a means to further ends. Social justice as a moral imperative calls for direct attention to who wins and loses in society. We extend this argument and posit that inclusivity by public sector leadership in public policy design, execution and evaluation is an important aspect of social justice within a country. Inclusivity in leadership in public policy is linked to the fundamental human rights of a person to realize his/her full potential.

Effective leadership in public policy can be conceptualized from a broader talent inclusivity perspective. A talent inclusivity perspective helps to identify the issues, challenges, prospects and solutions that the state requires to build a resilient and inclusive country. Individual differences are part of life, and appreciating talent inclusivity means respecting diverse individual talent and what they contribute in the public policy making eco-system.

3.3 Anthropology of Leadership

The concept of organizational culture is drawn from anthropology and is used to describe the relatively enduring set of values and norms that underline a social system. These values and norms may not be entirely conscious. They define a “meaning system” that enables members of a social system to attribute meaning and values to the various external and internal events they experience. Jordan(2008). As states explore the connection between citizen engagement and resilient socio-economic transformation, public sector leaders are tasked with thinking deeply about their unique ecosystem. Achieving a culture that encourages innovation requires public sector leaders to rise to challenges — navigating an increasingly globalized workforce, rapid technological change and fostering collaboration in a multigenerational, multicultural youthful workforce. This sensitivity to individual variation is an important skill for public sector leaders to possess. Almin & Ramdhan (2025).

Cultural anthropology is the comparative study of human societies and cultures. Peoples & Bailey(2014). We extend it and argue that when public policy design and execution unravel cultural codes and

facilitate an understanding of what is valued within a given context organizational design and culture, that represents the intersection between leadership, human resources management, public policy choices and anthropology.

Unraveling these cultural codes fosters empathy and helps leaders in public policy contexts to shape an appropriate response to citizens’ diverse needs. When leaders focus on people and culture and facilitate collaboration, observation and reflexivity this improves resilient and inclusive public policy priorities and choices for the benefit of citizens.

3.4 Leadership and Values

The construct of values is central to many fields in the social sciences and humanities. The last two decades have seen a growing body of psychological research that investigates the content, structure and consequences of personal values in many cultures. Sagiv et al (2017)

Values refer to what is good and worthy. They characterize both individuals and social collectives, such as nations, business organizations, and religious groups. Values of social collectives (often termed cultural values) represent the goals that members of the social collective are encouraged to pursue, and they serve to justify actions taken by collective members and leaders in pursuit of these goals. Schwartz (199). Values of individuals (often termed personal values) are broad desirable goals that motivate people’s action and serve as guiding principles in their lives. They affect people’s preferences and behavior over time and across situations.

Leadership is when individuals live their deepest personal values without compromise and use those values to create a compelling cause for others. Slap (2010). Slap used his research with over 10,000 managers from seventy countries to point out dichotomies that encapsulate the problems the modern business manager faces. In his research the personal values that an overwhelming number of managers in every position in every country reported as being most important to them were family and integrity.

We argue that in the arena of public policy, leaders who apply these values are able to drive transformative moments to design and execute solutions that positively affect citizens. We also submit leaders who can align their personal values with their professional role become rationally committed, behaviorally committed, have a high intent to stay the course and apply discretionary effort in solving issues in their eco-systems.

3.5 Ubuntu

Ubuntu lies at the heart of the African way of life and impacts on every aspect of people's well-being (Lefa 2026). Ubuntu is defined by Letseka (2011) as a form of human engagement that allows for critical thinking, non-domination and the optimal development of human relationships. Ubuntu means that each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others, Ubuntu is then to be aware of one's own being but also of one's duties towards one's neighbour.

Ubuntu is the principle of caring for each other's well-being and a spirit of mutual support. Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual's humanity. Msila (2008) states that Ubuntu means that the people are people through other people. It also acknowledged that both the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and social well-being is simply a way of living and being that allows our basic goodness to come forth. True Ubuntu recognises differences and hence always strives to strike consensus rather than impose a universal sameness on the issues (Msila 2008).

Though it is characterized by certain core values and principles, Ubuntu has a fluid nature as it is shaped by various perspectives (Magezi 2017). Gade (2011) argues that much of contemporary conception about Ubuntu—such as its characterization as African humanism, a philosophy, an ethic, or a worldview—originated primarily in written materials during the latter half of the 20th century.

According to Msila (2008) There five key social values known as the collective finger theory that underpins Ubuntu philosophy; survival, solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity, Ubuntu puts emphasis on how an individual contributes to the good of the collective values

The concept of Ubuntu may also be interpreted in terms of human rights and human dignity (Nicolaidis 2022). When Ubuntu is applied to the context of human dignity, it underscores the belief that every person possesses inherent worth and deserves to be treated with respect, regardless of their background, circumstances, or differences.

It asserts that “I am because we are” and expresses of having a sense of “humanity towards others”

Ubuntu considers human rights as moral principles or norms that designate certain standards of human behaviour that are required in dealing with other

human beings. One's rights and duties in society are grounded in a multifaceted philosophy because of the moral aspects which are a mixture of heritage and tradition. Ubuntu avows that society, and not any transcendent being, provides human beings with their basic humanity. An authentic individual human being is part of a complex and important relational, communal, societal, environmental and even mystical world. One's actions are correct to that extent that they are a matter of living harmoniously with others and doing one's duty while acting ethically and within the ambit of the law, and thus demonstrating reverence towards others in communal associations (Nicolaidis 2022)

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that traverses inter-, multi-, cross- and trans-disciplinary boundaries, informing intersubjectivity, research and practice. The principles of Ubuntu are deduced from the interwoven interpersonal, social, cosmic and metaphysical relations depicted in this collection of 21st-century scholarly work from Southern Africa (Mayisela et al (2026)

The concept of Ubuntu retains significance in Africa despite criticism for its perceived qualities of “vagueness,” “collectivism,” and “anachronism” (Metz 2011, p.534). We argue that when leaders apply the principles of Ubuntu in public policy making, it inures to the benefit of their citizens and promotes collective progress.

3.6 Ubuntu, Humanity Intelligence and Public Policy

Deontology of leadership refers to an obligation or duty required of a leader. This theory depends on the intention or will of an act and not on the consequences. It is strongly linked to a moral theory of human rights and goodwill. An action is right if and only if it is done in accordance with duty. It also means you treat people as intrinsic ends and not as a means to further ends. Ubuntu means “*I am because we are*”. It teaches that a person is a person through other people, meaning our well-being, identity, and humanity are tied directly to the community around us. We further extend this to argue that “a leader is a leader through other people and must make decisions that are correlated to the growth and transformation of their communities, followers and eco-systems. Ubuntu embodies interconnectedness, compassion, humanity and communal harmony.

We submit that UBUNTU is Africa's Authentic Culture of Deontology that must be the foundation for leadership, human resources and public policies that

drive inclusiveness and resilience to produce positive outcomes for citizens. Ubuntu is the foundation for humanity intelligence.

Humanity is an innate capacity for interest in the well being of others -- people, sentient beings -- with altruistic ethics. Intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. The purpose and task of Humanity Intelligence is to create the capacity of individuals and the human collective to embrace the universal values of dignity, equity, and compassion; and manifest peace, prosperity and a flourishing planet. Sharma(2017).

We argue that when a leader is driven by deontology, Ubuntu and humanity intelligence, it influences the design and execution of impactful public policies that promote dignity, compassion and empathy to enable positive outcomes for citizens

3.7 Knowledge Management Leadership and Public Policy Choices

The knowledge management and anthropological dimensions of leadership and public policy choices are reflected through values and norms that define a “meaning system” that enables leaders, within their geo-political eco-systems to utilize data and insights to attribute meaning and values to the various external and internal events they experience as they provide accountability for transformative governance and inclusive and resilient public policy choices. This aligns with a knowledge management perspective of leadership and public policy making data and insights analytics. A review of the literature on knowledge management indicates varying perspectives with respect to the philosophical definition on knowledge(Dueck,2001, Martensson, 2000, Fahey &Prusak, 1998). Three varying perspectives have been identified in the literature: (1) knowledge as an object (2) knowledge as residing in individual minds and (3) knowledge as being constructed socially. The definition of knowledge as an object posits that knowledge exists outside of people. This definition is associated with engineering(Hendriks 2001). It limits knowledge to information ie data organized and structure in a context relevant to the user (Wiig 1997). On the other hand, the philosophical perspective of knowledge as residing in individual minds, defines knowledge as residing in the minds of individual employees of the organization who apply cognitive processes to transform information into knowledge (Nonaka 1994). Knowledge is created through knowledge conversion, focusing on a dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge. Finally, the

social perspective considers knowledge to be socially constructed as groups of individuals engage in talk and activity around shared tasks or problems (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

In line with the three philosophical perspectives of knowledge, we argue that leadership in public policy require data, insights and analytics to produces axiomatic knowledge that explains the “*why*” of a policy choice, dictionary knowledge that explains the what of a policy choice, directory knowledge that explains the “*how of a policy choice*” and recipe knowledge that explains the “*should of a policy choice*”.

We argue that Ubuntu leadership and Ubuntu knowledge management approaches enables a leader to implement resilient and inclusive public polices and decisions that inures to the benefit of the wider community. It provides insights for a leader to define the why, what, how and should of a public policy that benefits all stakeholders from an empathy, inclusivity and pragmatic lens.

3.8 Philosophy of Leadership and Public Policy Choices

A leader’s public policy priorities and choices must be grounded on ontology and metaphysics. Ontology is the study of ‘being’ and is concerned with ‘what is’, i.e., the nature of existence and structure of reality as such (Crotty, 1998) or what it is possible to know about the world (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Ontology and metaphysics in leadership and public policy determines what is real and what exists in a leader’s eco-system and sets their view of what the subject matter is and guides decision rights and realistic choices.

Epistemology in general is the assumptions we make about the kind or the nature of knowledge (Richards, 2003) or how it is possible to find out about the world (Snape & Spencer, 200). For Crotty (1998), epistemology is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge and, necessarily, it embodies a certain understanding of what that knowledge entails

We argue that the epistemology of leadership determines how a leader knows about that reality and how they gather evidence eg data and insights and the approaches to diagnose, design execute and measure the impact of resilient and inclusive public policy choices. For example a leader’s knowledge and public policy choices is shaped by a priori knowledge

and justified independently of sensory experience. A leader who uses a priori knowledge anchored on Ubuntu provides leadership from a duty of goodwill, care and compassion for humanity. In addition, a leader who applies a posteriori knowledge anchored on Ubuntu uses data and insights and conversations that requires sensory input, perception, or physical verification. *I am because we are* is both apriori and a posteriori and shapes the ontological or metaphysical factors that shape public policy choices that creates resilient and inclusive change.

Leader-deontological realist is a leader who believes that doing good to humanity exist independently of our knowledge of their existence. A leader-interpretivist is a leader who is concerned with understanding the way humans make sense of the world around them. A leader-pragmatist is a leader who believes that the most important determinant of public policy choices is the trigger question, arguing that it is possible to work within both positivist and interpretivist positions. A pragmatic leader applies a practical approach, integrating different perspectives to help collect and interpret insights that shapes transformative public policy and governance. A leader positivist is a leader who believes working with an observable social reality.

We argue that when a leader's decision choices are grounded on a solid ontological frame, it helps to prioritize key public policy choices that adds value to the communities they lead.

3.9 Politics of Leadership and Complexity of Joint Action in Public Policy

Differences in perspectives in leadership decisions on public policy priorities and choices need to be grounded in the political and rational context. A leader's rational choices in public policy follow from enterpriserisk management principles and assumptions that certain leadership practices complement existing resources and strategies. For example, the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 1991) argues that firms have an advantage when they have access to inimitable and valuable resources. A resource-based view of leadership is inherently political. Marxist Theory of Social Classes, the Group/Pluralistic Theory of Politics and other various analytical frameworks in political science have given useful insights into the processes involved in influencing the use of power and authority over individuals in a society. One of the most popular definitions was offered by Harold Lasswell, who described politics as who gets what, when and how. Another equally popular definition was given by David Easton, who

said politics involves the authoritative allocation of values. Based on the above, we argue that the politics of leadership in public policy can be extended to also cover leadership decision rights over the allocation of resources and the resulting opposition of perspectives from key stakeholders in the geo-political eco-system. This is aligned with the RBV model. Kinnie Kinnie & Swart (2013) argue that resource-based advantages include human capital advantages (skills), social capital advantages (trusting/reciprocal relations), and organisational processes advantages (where practices, values and organisational systems align), which can all be enabled by appropriate leadership and human resources management practices. There is a competition for the stock of resources in leadership decision-making processes, and if they are fairly allocated, it constitutes a mutual gain for all stakeholders. This we contend is consistent with Ubuntu.

It can thus be argued that leveraging the politics of leadership is key to underpin public policy choices, priorities and practices, and they must be anchored on a core set of values, such as service to the customer and/or quality in design and function (Purcell et al., 2009).

The politics of leadership in public policy involves the creation of coalitions (mobilization), having a loyal constituency, managing various interests and as and when the need arises, making compromises to facilitate the realization of one's interests and organisational resources. Tichy's (1983) Technical Political Cultural model helps to understand the political, technical and cultural dynamics in leadership decision making and how bargaining takes place by interest groups. In the exercise of decision-making mandates on public policy choices and priorities, the political dynamics are the views of dominant groups, including bargaining by powerful organizational groups. The cultural dynamics constitute the shared symbols and values which make up the organizational culture. We argue that these strands must be managed together or realigned for effective public policy choices and priorities that transforms the lives of citizens.

Bacharach (2005) asserts that politics is an essential skill for leaders and managers who wish to get things done. The art of how to get them on your side is crucial at any rank and has human resource implications. Whetton and Cameron (1991) argue, for example, that politics and force are marks of a personal ability to change and contribute to the environment by using a variety of assets aimed at improving products at work. People who have force, power and influence can shape their environment according to their own will, while those who do not make use of these assets

remain unsatisfied and ungratified (Putnam, 1995). Politics is also a key factor during institutional change processes. (Burns, 1961).

Ferris and King (1991) are among the few researchers who have suggested a relationship between HRM and organizational politics. Their perspective is that the use of influence behavior in leadership and HRM is affected by the skills of the user, ambiguity in the decision context, and propensity to use influence behavior.

Two major components of the Ferris and King (1991) model are political skills and the use of influence behavior. Bacharach distinguishes between two types of political skills (elsewhere defined as tactics; e.g., Kipnis et al., 1980; Erez & Rim, 1982) that help individuals build coalitions and maintain them in the long run. Among the “positive” political skills are persuasion, rationality, exchange, and even assertiveness, ingratiation and impression management. The “negative” political skills include manipulations, dis-information, mis-information and the use of upward appeals. In his view, positive politics in HRM appears where people know how to use positive influence behaviors and tactics, and try to avoid negative behaviors.

This type of politics of leadership is the result of the constructive use of power and influence in the human resource ecosystem in public policy. If “positive” political skills are used, the legitimacy of political behaviors increases even further, which again results in positive/constructive outcomes (Drory et al., 2010).

The politics of leadership is deemed to be positive when leaders use political skills that are legitimate and accepted by others, and lead to feelings of equity, fairness, willingness to invest effort and be involved in decisions. This we contend is aligned with Ubuntu.

Finally it is important for leaders in the public policy arena to understand and navigate the complexity of joint action. Complexity of joint action” in public policy is when actors pursue their diverse interests and play political games through maneuvering, bargaining, negotiations, demands and other forms of political action. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984). Complexity of joint action is of the biggest challenges leaders and policymakers face around the world is bridging the gap between policy intentions and implementation outcomes, whether in meeting public demand for development, education, health, security, or foreign policy, or achieving more specific policy goals.

We argue that a leadership driven by Ubuntu can navigate and manage the complexity of joint action by creating consensus mobilization through stakeholder engagement on the importance of the communitarian and transformative outcomes that will accrue when public policy choices are designed for the common good of citizens who are right holders in the public policy eco-system.

3.10 Organisational Model for Resilient Public Policy

The Burke Litwin organisational model provides a holistic “scanning machine” to enable Ubuntu leadership centred choices in determining priorities in public policy.

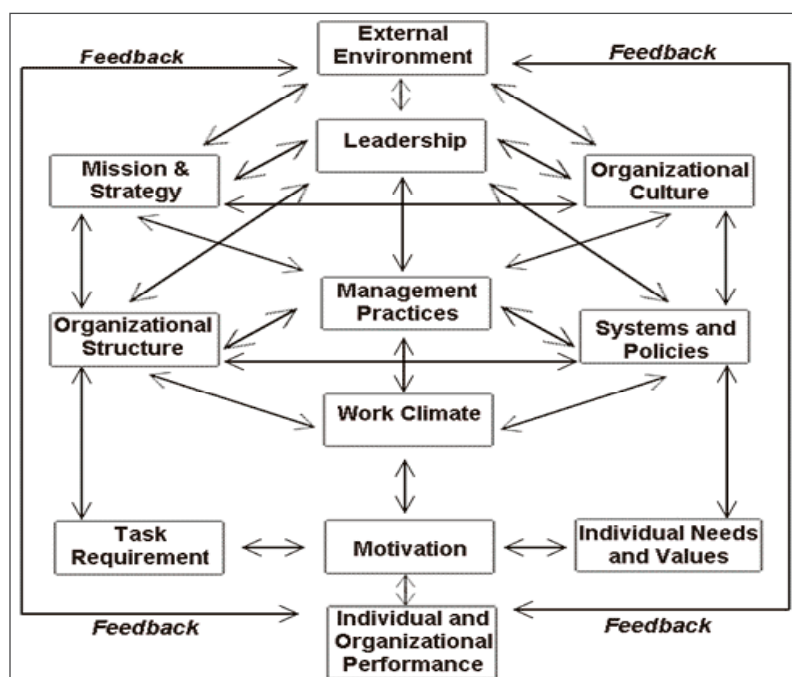


Figure 1. Organisational Model For Impactful Public Policy

The Burke-Litwin Change Model was published by George H Litwin and W Warner Burke in 1992. This model shows the causal effects of change between 12 key areas of organizational design. Using the model, you can learn which organizational variables to change and why. You can then use this understanding to analyze, diagnose and even predict the effects of change throughout an organization.

- The Burke-Litwin model is presented vertically in order to make a statement about how organisational change is affected.
- Burke believes that organisational change stems more from environmental impact than from any other factor which is why he puts it at the top of his model.
- He sees external environment, mission and strategy, leadership and organisational culture as the primary levels for major organisational change, or transformational change.
- He sees the remaining elements in his model as levers for transactional change., for fine tuning and improving the organisations existing behaviour.
- Arrows connecting various elements in the model add to its complexity and richness and reinforce the open systems point that change in one part of the system may ultimately affect other parts of the system.

In this research, we included the Burke-Litwin model as a key organisation change models for the study since we felt it was relatively comprehensive to analyze the organisational design factors that were at play in our case study. The Burke-Litwin Mode (1992) defines twelve factors that help to diagnose the case for change as well as the overall change processes, namely external environment, mission & strategy, leadership, organizational culture, structure, systems, management practices, work unit climate, tasks and skills, individual values and needs and individual and overall organizational performance.

- *External Environment:* The key forces or variables outside the organization that influence organizational performance. E.g. customer behavior and satisfaction, market place conditions, political circumstances, regulations, changing technology, etc.
- *Mission and Strategy:* mission concerns what the organization is all about, its purpose and primary goals. Strategy focuses on how the mission is to be executed as defined by senior leadership.
- *Leadership:* this is concerned with behavior of senior executives and how they provide direction, influence, visioning. We extend this to include the definition of decision space and decision mandate.
- *Organizational Culture:* values, i.e. espoused and in- use, explicit as well as the implied rules, regulations, customs, principles, practices, symbols, artifacts, rituals that influence the interaction of staff and the organization.
- *Structure:* responsibility, authority, communication, decision making and control structure that exists between the people of the organization.

- *Systems:* Systems include all types of policies, procedures and business processes with regard to both the people and the operations of the organization.
- *Management Practices:* ways of work that deliver the organization's strategy and ensure management of resources.
- *Work Unit Climate:* refers to how the employees think, feel, and the kind of relationships the employees share with their team members and members of other teams.
- *Tasks and Skills:* refers to what a specific job position demands and the kind of skills and knowledge that an employee must have in order to fulfill the task responsibilities of that job position. It helps to see how well jobs and employees have been matched.
- *Individual Values and Needs:* This refers to an employee's opinion about their work so as to identify the quality factors that will result in job enrichment and better job satisfaction.
- *Motivation Level:* refers to the motivation level of the employees and their willingness to put in extra effort to achieve organizational goals.
- *Individual and Organisational Performance:* This dimension takes into account the level of performance, on individual and organizational levels, in key areas like productivity, quality, efficiency, budget and customer satisfaction, etc.

We argue that the Burke Litwin model serves as a useful framework to enable Ubuntu centered leadership choices in public policy.

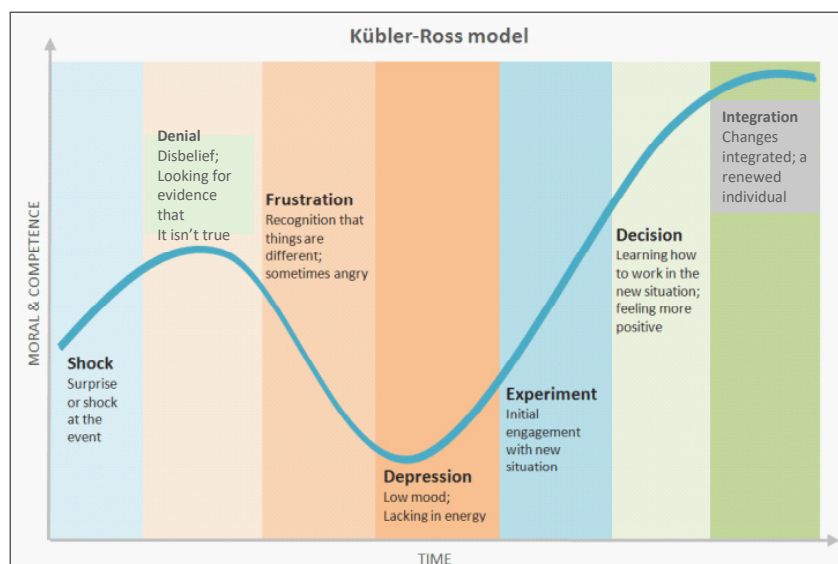


Figure 2. Kubler Ross Model, Acknowledge & Manage how you FEEL; what you THINK, what you will DO

3.11 Ubuntu and Managing Change in Public Policy

Public policy decision choices that solves problems require a change management mindset anchored on the Kubler Ross model. This helps a leader to understand how and why citizens react to the effect of policies that affects their status quo.

Kubler-Ross(1969) described five stages of grief. These stages represent the normal range of feelings people experience when facing death or significant change in their lives. The Kubler Loss change curve, provides a model to focus on and deal with the **emotional response** of people affected a change process. It all starts with an event or an announcement that produces **Shock** or surprise at the event resulting in the initial reaction of **Denial**. This can then develop in **Anger** due to the **frustration** of unmet expectations. **Depression** is the stage where the person fights the Change but starts redeveloping some form of energy. **Experiment** is a phase where the person begins an initial engagement with the new situation tries to make sense of what happens. **Decision** is the stage where person begins to learn to adapt to the new situation feeling more positive. **Integration** is finally the stage where moving-on happens. Moving across these stages requires three types of support: Information and Communication, Emotional Support and Guidance and Direction — all critical in the way that Change can impact.(Careda 2020).

We argue that a leader is required to navigate citizen's reaction to public policy choices that results in a change to their status quo. When a leader is shaped by Ubuntu, they are able to apply empathy, love, compassion and inclusion without compromising their decision choices that strengthens communities. Ubuntu leadership skills helps a leader to shorten the period of grieving of citizens during moments of adversity.

4. Methodology

The study applied a comprehensive desk top review of numerous publications on EVD, together with previously published works of the author, and information from the author's presentation at the Students and Young Professionals African Liberty Academy (SYPALA) 2026 conference. Some of the key documents reviewed included Plan International presentation to European Union on International conference on Ebola in Brussels, Ebola 2014-15 Facts and Figures, Doctors without Borders Chatham House reports on Ebola, 2017, International Crises Group Ebola reports, Core Humanitarian Standards, UN

Security Council reports on Ebola, Plan International, Save The Children International and World Vision International; Children's Ebola Assessment Recovery Report, Sierra Leone, BBC reports on Ebola, MSF Guidance Paper Ebola Treatment Centre (ETC), UNFPA, UNICEF reports on Ebola, WHO Statement on the first meeting of the IHR Emergency Committee on the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, Ebola: beyond the health emergency ; summary of research into the consequences of the Ebola outbreak for children and communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Additional Validation of secondary documentation was done through interviews with selected respondents who previously worked at the Office of the First lady, UNICEF, Plan International, Ministry of Social Welfare and Children's Affairs.

This approach helped to analyse factors that influence, enable or restrict Ubuntu leadership skills that promote resilient and inclusive public policy choices during humanitarian crises and how this can be replicated in normal times as well.

The research was remotely conducted from May 2026 to August 2026. It is worth noting that the author had previously conducted previous researches on EVD in 2014-2016 however the present study offers more rigour and insights from a leadership lens using Ubuntu as a conceptual framework. The case study is still situated during the period of the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) from 2014 to 2016. The study also draws upon a qualitative review of relevant articles on leadership, human resources (HR) and a recap of personal experiences during the author's time as Country Director of Plan International, Sierra Leone from 2014 to 2017 where he collaborated with key stakeholders in government, traditional authorities, secret societies, other development partner to manage the response. Desk study was used to collect relevant scholarly works pertinent to the research questions.

5. Applied Case Study – Ebola Virus Disease in Sierra Leone

Over the 2014-16 period, Sierra Leone had the highest number of Ebola cases ever, with each of its 14 districts affected. The first case was declared on 25 May 2014 in a region bordering Guinea, and its final case was recorded in the last week of January in 2016. By 17 March 2016, when Sierra Leone was declared free of Ebola transmission for the second time, a total of 14,124 confirmed, probable and

suspected cases (nearly half the regional total) and 3,956 deaths had been reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). It was an epidemic that was defined by the UN as a threat to international security. The initial response to the outbreak was characterized by confusion, chaos and denial. Sierra Leone's health system was already weak, and the government was unable to mount a robust response. WHO did not mobilise the level of assistance and expertise expected—a failure for which it has been widely criticised. The rest of the international community was slow to react to the alert sounded by Médecins Sans Frontières, which recognised the severity of the threat early on (Coleman 2016)

5.1 Ubuntu Leadership

Managing a complex humanitarian crisis requires values-driven leadership. The successful Ebola response strategy had an overarching aim of building trust, confidence and support between the general public and the leadership, which was facilitated by faith-based, traditional and secret society leaders. Their integrated response effort helped to bring the epidemic to a quick end. Leadership during times of crises require courage, political will, and the commitment to take risks. For instance, the strategy by Plan International Sierra Leone to engage with Secret Societies, with the support of the former First Lady Sia Nyamaa Koroma, greatly facilitated the social mobilisation and community engagement aspect of the fight to defeat EBOLA. (Coleman 2016 and Coleman 2020).

Leadership also requires firmness and a capacity to have resolve in the face of adversity. Former President Ernest Bai Koroma's decisions to impose a stay-at-home policy and to ban public gatherings, coupled with the decision of the presidents of Ghana and Senegal, John Dramani Mahama and Macky Sall to create a humanitarian corridor to facilitate and coordinate the mobilisation of support and resources from the UN and other development agencies are examples of leaders making strong, if unpopular but altruistic decisions to manage the crisis. This act is an example of Ubuntu leadership. Mahama and Sall were applying "I am because we are" and this was a game changer that prevented the disease from spreading to the entire sub region which could have potentially annihilated the entire subregion.

Another key aspect of leadership during the Ebola epidemic was the opposition's support of the government. Koroma reached out to two opposition leaders, Julius Maada Bio (Sierra Leone's current president and the leader of the Sierra Leone Peoples

Party at that time) and Kande Yumkella and assigned them to provide leadership in their political strongholds as behavior change and strategic communication champions. Bio and Yumkella provided visible support to the government. Their parties also worked with the government in parliament to address key issues around the Ebola response. During emergency situations, such as Ebola, political leaders ought to work together to confront a common foe, and that is exactly what the political leaders in Sierra Leone did. This was an example of Ubuntu in practice.

5.2 Multi-Layered Engagement Anchored on Anthropology

Multi-layered culture management plays a key role in determining the success or failure of leadership in the management of a humanitarian crisis. Culture refers to core values, artefacts, symbols, processes, systems, and stories that collectively influence the "way things are done" over some time. Sierra Leone's experience with Ebola shows that a recognition of culture and customs helps to frame the level of engagement at the community, national, and global levels to effectively manage crises. In Sierra Leone, at the community level, secret society, faith-based and traditional leaders facilitated and supported ownership for community care centres, social mobilisation and community engagement. At the national level, the government actively engaged with development partners, the youth, media and political and business elites to assess the quality of the response to ensure accountability, speed and rigour. Youth groups played a key role in developing a feedback mechanism using information technology to report on real-time issues and challenges. At the regional/global level, there was active engagement with several agencies, such as the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations and the WHO. The EU Brussels Conference (2015) also adopted resolutions committing to mobilise resources to address the Ebola crisis. This was an example of Ubuntu in practice.

5.3 Organisational Design - Accountability and Structure

Leadership during crises requires clarity on decision space and decision mandate, backed by transparency in the communication of indicators of success to ensure that everyone involved in the response is held accountable for their actions before, during and after the emergency is over. Sierra Leone set up a National Ebola Response Centre (NERC), which supervised the District Ebola Response Centres (DERC). The NERC was led by a CEO who reported directly to the

president (10). The command and control structure during the crisis brought discipline to the response. Civil society groups and non-state actors, such as youth groups that used feedback mechanism to evaluate the response and the press that highlighted suspected cases of fraud, were also actively engaged in the process. This was an example of Ubuntu leadership by the youth and civil society actors borne out of empathy, compassion a love for humanity and determination to protect the wider community.

The core humanitarian standards, launched in Copenhagen in 2014, describe the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action. Humanitarian organisations may use it as a voluntary code with which to align their internal procedures. It can also be used as a basis for verification of performance. They include the following nine commitments that response is appropriate and relevant; effective and timely; strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects; based on communication, participation and feedback; complaints are welcomed and addressed; response is coordinated and complementary; actors continuously learn and improve; staff are supported to do the job effectively and are treated fairly and equitably; and resources are managed and used responsibly for the intended purpose. Effective leadership during a crisis requires effective talent management driven by a total rewards strategy that covers compensation, benefits, performance, recognition and continuous professional development of key frontline staff and responders who design, manage and evaluate the crisis response program in alignment with the core humanitarian standards. execution and rigour must be backed by reliable data.

Management, coordination and logistics are critical towards responding effectively to an emergency. In the case of Sierra Leone's Ebola response, there was a clear definition of the organisational model for leadership, management, professionals, specialists, administrative roles, and the skills and expertise needed. This was backed by a clear structure with emphasis on clarity of decision space and decision mandate by key state and non-state actors. This drove execution and rigour.

Also, the structured coordination of the efforts of other stakeholders via technical subject matter pillars or thematic areas was important to ensure synergy of efforts during this period. Logistics—defined as roles that facilitate disaster risk response operations and include estimating equipment needs, procurement and distribution of supplies, transport of patients and

samples and other response execution resources—is very critical during a complex humanitarian crisis and must be well-planned and consistently monitored and evaluated during a complex humanitarian crisis and must be well planned. Leadership was enabled by a multi-disciplinary approach towards engaging key expertise and stakeholders to respond to the crises.

During the Ebola epidemic, the feedback mechanisms provided the space to hold people accountable. It was important to have a network of informants who will provide alerts and intelligence to support surveillance, isolation, contact tracing and testing strategies. Youth reporters, information focal points and community reference groups were in action to gather data on sick people in the community to alert the DERC, whose workers would then visit and confirm and be able to provide food and other basic supplies to the quarantined households. The government leveraged technology and social media to ensure the availability of real-time data to guide decision-making. This we argue is an example of collective UBUNTU leadership of empathy, altruism and love for humanity.

5.4 Multidisciplinary Conceptual Capabilities And Leadership Skills

Managing a complex humanitarian crisis requires conceptual clarity in a theory of change to frame the overall goals, strategic objectives and results in a framework with a focus on intermediate outcomes, outputs, indicators, and measurable activities. Sierra Leone's Ebola response was framed around the following thematic areas: surveillance, case management, testing (of the living and dead), isolation and treatment, social mobilisation, burials and psychosocial support. This conceptual clarity helped to develop sub-themes around child protection, education, social mobilisation, community engagement, health and livelihood. In effect, the theory of change was multi-disciplinary in nature and combined biological and social science as well as preventive and curative solutions. It was not only a health issue but a socio-cultural issue, with faith and culturally based undertones. This created space for many development and social actors to support the response. Multi-disciplinary skills is also a manifestation of Ubuntu as it forges unity and cohesion amongst different stakeholders and expertise.

6. Proposing an UBUNTU Leadership Onion

Following from the discussions of the case study, we propose a six layer Ubuntu Leadership Onion which provides a multi-disciplinary leadership skills

framework for driving resilient and inclusive public policy choices for Africa.

The first layer onion defines a leader's philosophic approach to leadership and public policy choices. The second layer onion defines a leader's analytical thinking frame underlining their leadership intent, conceptual clarity, multi-layered and multi-disciplinary choices.

The Third layer onion intersects the leader's deontological political and technical approach to produce inclusive public policy choices and outcomes.

The fourth layer onion provides the frame for disciplined execution of high priority public policies that inure to the common good of their citizens. These include the organizational model for clarifying roles

and tasks, operational excellence process standards, selecting the right leaders who role model Ubuntu values and behaviors culture, data and insights that generate knowledge management during execution, selecting the right people with the right skills, leveraging technology, ensuring checks and balances through an effective governance and accountability structure and deploying strategic communication to inform public understanding and strengthen evidence-based decision-making during the EVD.

The fifth layer onion guides time choices in defining a theory or change or theory of failure.

The sixth layer onion and the most deepest of the onion is the core values that is at the heart of a leader's public policy decisions and choices that delivers "*I am because we are*" for the benefit of their citizens.

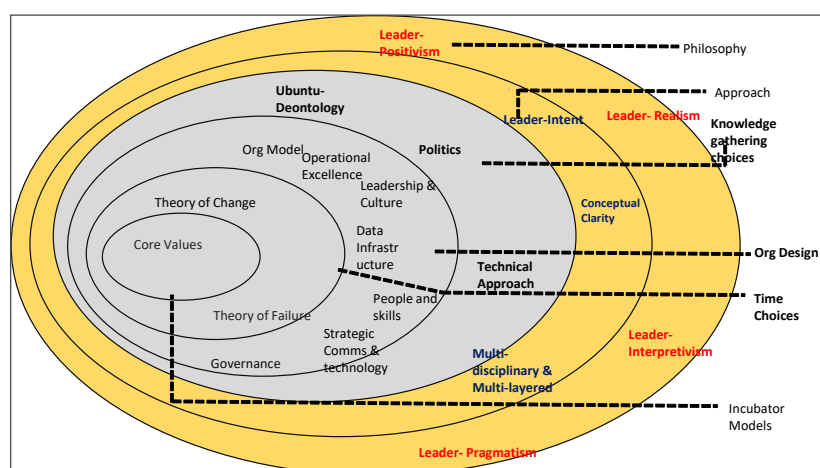


Figure 3. Leadership Onion

7. Proposing CEICN Leadership Skills Framework for Resilient & Inclusive Public Policy

In order to implement the Leadership Onion, we propose a CEICN leadership skills framework.

Community is a skill that focuses on the collective good of all stakeholders in the public policy ecosystem. The strategic focus is to develop and retain a multi-layered community of visionary leaders who are carefully selected based on values and behaviors assessment and development tools and when selected provided with comprehensive onboarding to socialise them into the philosophy and practice of community oriented leadership.

Empathy and inclusivity is a skill that focuses on understanding and including the position of diverse stakeholders to be affected by the leader's public policy decision choices. The strategic focus is to create a committed, empowered inclusive empathetic leaders and protect their wellbeing. The outcomes are Leadership Empathy, values and behaviors based rewards and leader care and well-being.

Impact is a skill that focuses on a leader's capability to measure the contribution of each stakeholder inputs to the execution of public policy decision choices. The strategic focus is to ensure an effective performance management culture and system that holds leaders to account for their public policy choices.

Courage is a skill that focuses on a leader's capability to make bold decisions in the face of adversity that benefits the wider community. The strategic focus of this skill is to produce a solid leadership pipeline and succession planning that produces high performing leaders.

Stakeholder value is a skill that focuses on a leader's capability to deliver stakeholder value through low cost, high impact interventions to produce multi-disciplinary solutions anchored on humanity intelligence and technology driven outcomes. It requires effective strategic communication skills. Strategic communications is a key leadership skills as it plays a critical role in informing public understanding and strengthening evidence-based decision-making. By connecting the dots between message, audience,

and mission, it ensures that knowledge is not only shared, but meaningfully received. It is not just about what is communicated—but why it matters, how it is framed and delivered, to whom, through which channels, and at what moment.

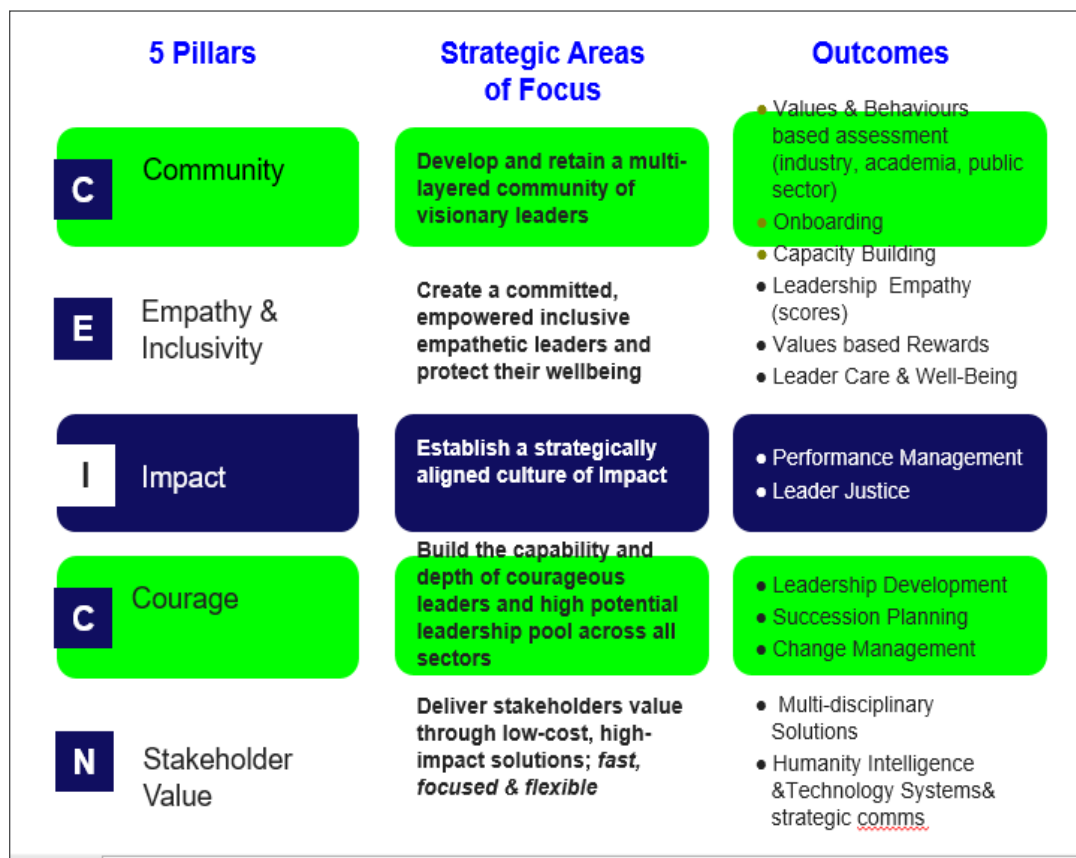


Figure 4. CEICN Leadership Skills Framework For Resilient & Inclusive Public Policy

8. Implications of Study

Using the Ebola Virus Disease Case study in Sierra Leone, we submit that leadership skills that drive public policy priorities to create resilience and inclusive societies in Africa must be:

1. Anchored on Deontology and Anthropology (UBUNTU) – culture of morality, emotional intelligence, goodwill and shared meaning to transform society for peace and dignity
2. Framed by Leadership Onion & CEICN to strengthen execution excellence through insights driven organizational design to enable change and accountability in governance
3. Amplify the principle and practice that true purpose of leadership is to drive impact that ensures dignity, inclusivity, peace and sustainable livelihood. This requires multi-disciplinary knowledge and approaches.
4. Meaningful progress emerges when thoughtful values based leadership drive effective public policy and transformational governance
5. Leadership thinking that pivots from Youth as

time bomb to youth as a seed to be transformed to innovation, energy and productivity

6. Create Inclusive Space for leaders and stakeholders to convene, connect and amplify public policy choices that promotes UBUNTU and a duty to do good in line with “I am because we are”.
7. Combination of all the six factors is what will enable public policy choices that enables inclusive and resilient growth that enables resources mobilization, partnerships & innovation for Africa

9. Conclusion

This study confirms that values and disciplined execution is key to effective leadership as it drives inclusive and resilient public policy choices and priorities. Leaders must first develop a strong understanding of the values that guide their decisions before attempting to influence others or implement public policies. The EVD response highlighted the fact that public policy choices should follow a deliberate process beginning with an understanding of the environment in which a policy would operate. This involves recognizing the broader context, identifying stakeholder outcomes, determining the value each

stakeholder can realistically derive, prioritizing recommendations and developing an implementation plan.

The EVD case study in Sierra Leone indicates that a values-based leadership rooted in morality and Ubuntu provides a solid foundation to build an effective organisational design and execution in public policy. The combination of values based leadership grounded on Ubuntu backed by a cohesive organizational design of the public policy choices and priorities together with the creation of inclusive spaces that brings together diverse voices, connects stakeholders and ensures that communities have meaningful opportunities to contribute to policy decisions whether in normal times or in crises moments.

What African needs is UBUNTU leadership skills and public policy priorities that have a strong ontological foundation to enable a cohesive organizational design that produces quality services. Ubuntu leadership enables the exercise of inclusive decision rights, a shared purpose grounded on a strong culture and drives community oriented behaviours and discipline in policy execution. Ubuntu leadership skills ensures that public policy choices are resilient and built to ensure sustainability to improve the lives of citizens.

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