

GLOBALIZATION: EMERGING ISSUES IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

When the phenomenon of globalization was first articulated, it was received with acclaim in some significant circles who viewed it as a process of enabling financial and investment markets to operate internationally without regimes interference, and fast moving information would enhance the process. Multinational companies embraced globalization as providing immense opportunities for developing business and expanding the democratic space for all nations. However, in this paper, I have argued that the process of globalization, as inevitable as it is, has exacerbated underdevelopment in developing nations and communities. I further argued that globalization has direct bearing on my foundational thesis: that globalization is apt to marginalize developing people and communities when sound moral principles do not animate players in the developmental game. The paper highlighted emerging pertinent issues that favor the stronger players at the expense of the weaker ones. In other words, I perceived globalization (as it is conceptualized today) as posing serious developmental challenges that need to be highlighted and addressed rationally in order to respond to all globalization dynamics responsibly. My conclusion was that the need to inject moral capital into international business, education, and governance was urgent.

Key words: Economic, moral capital, social progress, developing nations, ethical issues, business leadership

Introduction

Johnson (2015) observed recently that “globalization may be the most important trend of the 21st century” (p. 369). Globalization is a phenomenon or process that goes on in ways that make the whole globe shrink all the time as human beings all over the world explore and exploit this same globe. As human beings interact and move around the world, they share, influence and impact one another in one way or the other. The process itself is not initiated by any one any time or any where. However, it is a kind of trend that is unstoppable. Human beings continue to move north, south, east and west of this one inhabited globe called earth. Even movements of the same human beings have also been globalized.

Globalization Defined

What is globalization and why is it important to understand it and the inevitability of impact it has on all human beings with implications for better or for worse? Under the heading of “Globalization 101”, globalization is defined as “a process of interaction and integration among people, companies, and governments of different nations.” It is also observed here that the process of globalization is driven by international trade, invest-

ments, emigration, travel, and electronic information galaxy of our time. With the wave of globalization, human life has been affected. Environment, human cultures, political systems, economic development, physical human well-being, have all been affected in one way or the other. What has transpired so far, has revealed that globalization has been embraced by some thinkers as a catalyst to human progress, while others castigate the same process as retarding and curtailing progress of the poor just to favor the rich. So, opponents of globalization view it as unjust.

It not hard to identify dynamics which come with globalization and may be considered as aiding human beings globally. At the same time it is not hard to identify other dynamics which may be considered as damaging to the environmental ecosystem and fomenting a system of global social injustices. There are strong arguments in favor of globalization, and the arguments that are against the process are also quite strong. Among the proponents of globalization, there are those who argue that the process has ushered in a new phase in global economic development whereby both the developed and developing nations may harvest greatly from international interaction as different investors do business globally. It is further argued that the poor of this world will benefit from the pro-



cess and be able to raise their standards of living. It is also argued that the cost of goods and services drops as result of globalization and that cross-cultural interaction is beneficial.

On the other hand, there are those who see more negatives and paint very bleak pictures about globalization. Johnson (2015) cites some students of human well-being as noting that “global capitalism encourages greed rather than concern for others. Ethical and spiritual values have been overshadowed by the profit motive. Local cultural traditions and the environment are being destroyed in the name of economic growth. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing” (p. 375). Much more can be said for globalization and much more may be said against it.

Not long ago, young students, at high school and early college levels were asked about the assets and liabilities of globalization. The way the young people answered the question concerning globalization were quite revealing in that there is no consensus yet on whether it should be embraced without hesitation. Some considered the process of globalization as advantageous to all human beings while others pointed out disadvantages. by listing advantages. Those who favor globalization list the following reasons:

- Resources of different countries are used for producing goods and services they are able to do more efficiently.
- Consumers to get much wider variety of products to choose from.
- Consumers get the product they want at a more competitive price.
- Companies are able to procure input goods and services required at most competitive prices.
- Companies get access to much wider markets.
- It promotes understanding and good will among the different countries.
- Business and investors get much wider opportunities for investment.
- Adverse impact of fluctuations in agricultural productions in area can be minimized by pooling of production of different areas.

This is quite a long list of advantages which are connected with the process of globalization, and one is impressed to learn that it is these young teenagers who demonstrates such thoughtfulness about a process that affects all people around the globe.

Along the same vein or advocacy for advantages of globalization, Johnson (2015) cites more advantages of globalization: The process of global-

ization compels diversity reality in any setting in the world today and that is advantageous in the sense that diverse organizations:

- are more innovative;
- make better decisions;
- have lower absentee and turnover rates;
- attract higher quality employees; and
- improve their public images and gain market share.

In a way, diversity compels us to be diversity competent today, and thus leading us to higher levels of ethical/moral living, relating, and serving, because diversity competence includes all of this. There is no question about the globalization process inviting or compelling humankind to think afresh of how to get along, live, relate and serve harmoniously on a shrinking globe. It calls for broadening of scope and conceptual growth.

On the side of opponents of globalization some selected arguments go as follows:

- Developed countries can stifle development of underdeveloped countries.
- Economic depression in one country can trigger adverse reactions across the globe as was the case in 2008.
- It can increase the spread of communicable diseases.
- Companies face much greater competition, and such may put smaller companies at a disadvantage since they do not have the resources to compete at a global scale.
- Globalization can ruin the environment as it is already happening with global warming and climate changes.
- Can systematically fleece the world as cut throat competition increases.
- Those with power and know how may monopolize privileges.
- It widens more the gap between the rich and the poor and thus making socio-economic inequalities even worse.
- Brings about cultural convergences whereby the dominant culture swallows the less dominant ones. Some observe that globalization brings about cultural homogenization whereby the cultural values of the less developed are eroded.
- May increase unemployment.
- Through advertisements globalization engenders predilection to consumerism where

by people's tastes and attractions dictate what they buy even if they do not really need what they spend money for. My observations reveal to me that consumerism comes with dictatorial taste-makers who enslave people and compel them to buy more and more of what they do not need. There seems to be no end to the pull towards consumerism even as holidays and special occasions are all commercialized.

- Fuels corruption as people seek ways and means of quick satisfactions in some ways.
- Comes with adverse effects on security and social welfare. The governments may abdicate their obligations to all citizens by "privatizing" and leaving the poor with difficulties.
- Increases flow of skilled and non-skilled jobs from developed countries to developing nations as corporations seek out the cheapest labor.
- Threatens the weak in terms of media control by a handful of corporations that promote their interests and limit cultural expressions of the weak.
- In the worst case scenario, globalization may lead to reactions of violence as those who are affected struggle to preserve their cultural heritage.
- May lead to the perception that some international bodies like World Trade Organization are not real "world" entities but just Western imperialistic organizations which are bent on infringing on individual and other national sovereignties.
- Increases chances of civil wars within developing countries when interested external parties foment agitations which are intended to thwart what they perceive to be threatening their political or business agenda. Moreover, even among developed countries there may be cold wars which may actually warm up as nations vie for dominance and resources.
- May bring about brain drain. When human capital gravitates towards places and situations where economic and social returns are more favorable.

The list of arguments pro and con on globalization can go on and on. The process of globalization, as inevitable as it is, may not just be left alone to take its course as competitive forces of any kind dictate. There are deeper issues which emanate from the process of

globalization which compel us, not only to understand, but also to respond responsibly in order to enhance human life and well-being. Global and wholistic human development and progress cannot be left to the rapacious elements of human nature as it is. Current and pertinent issues are emerging and in connection with globalization. Johnson (2015), while highlighting the positive side of globalization, also underlines the global shadows of globalization. He notes that concentration of power in a country like the United States of America, as the by-product of globalization increased the likelihood of abuse of that same power. Out of those powerful countries are corporations which now wield enormous influence in the global market place. It is now a reality that some "multinational companies have more economic clout than many nations" (p. 376). Among the shadows which are cast as direct results or by-products of globalization are the following:

The Global Shadow of Power

There are events and developments in the world which illustrate the point that the interdependence which is necessitated by globalization conveys enormous powers to each entity that comprises the interdependent set up. For example, "the recent Greek financial crisis shook the entire European Union, pushed down the stock markets in Europe and North America, and slowed down global economic recovery" (Johnson, 2015, p. 375).

As already hinted above, some corporations wield too much power today. 40% of the world's wealth is owned by 1% of the world's richest, 44 of the world's 100 largest economies are corporations. Wal-Mart has annual revenue which exceeds the gross national products of 174 countries. Such enormous economic power can be used to bribe government officials as has already happened in Mexico.

The Global Shadow of Privilege

Johnson (2015, p. 376) also highlights what he refers to as the "global shadow of privilege." The 1% of the rich who hold 40% of the world's wealth are certainly privileged. Such economic power may be abused to advance the interests of the rich. Moreover, privileged nations also consume more at the expense of the poor and the environment.



The Global Shadow of Mismanaged Information

In the process of advertising, “business establishments deceive and mislead consumers among the economically depressed and take advantage of the uninformed in advertising their product. They may also cast shadow by withholding information even in connection with their product” (Johnson 2015, p. 377).

The Global Shadow of Inconsistency

Some business establishments take advantage of people’s underdevelopment and ignorance to maximize profits at the expense of people’s well-being in a setting where they do business. Such inconsistent business establishments apply lower standards safety standards and supply products to consumers which they dare not apply in their home countries. At times the same business entities become accomplices in violation of human rights because they may be benefitting from the status quo. There are more shadows cast by corporations.

The Global Shadow of Misplaced and Broken Loyalties

Environmental degradation, poverty, and hunger may be allowed by national leaders who are more keen to please external interested parties who do not care about the well-being of the local people who are affected negatively by those who do business in their place. Poorer players of globalization still feel betrayed by false promises of globalization. Trade barriers still remain where, theoretically, they are not supposed to be there and rich countries still retain their “special interests” to the disadvantage of the weak. Multinational companies take advantage of the weaker nations. They may invest in a weaker nation taking advantage of lower labor costs and still stash off show huge profits. All of this makes a mockery of economic justice that is supposed to be the watch word of globalization. This leads to another global shadow.

The Global Shadow of Irresponsibility

Multinational companies have a tendency to lower standards for their operations in situations where standards are not enforced by governing establishments. It is irresponsible for leaders in other countries to fail to prevent their followers’ misdeeds for the sake of short term benefit. Company standards must consistently be

adhered to no matter where the company is operating. So, with all the strong points for or against globalization it becomes vitally important to go beyond winning in the current debate and delve deeper into how real human life is affected by globalization. With such global shadows, some of which have been identified, there is an urgent need to search for lights to guide humankind towards responsible living, relating, serving and doing any business. Ordinary business interests need to be examined closely in order to develop more humane moral leadership philosophy.

Globalization Calls for Moral Leadership

The global moral leader of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi, identified what he referred to as “seven deadly sins” which would destroy humankind. The “geo-economics” of globalization bring about socio-political conditions which are just irreconcilable when it comes all human beings in all places and in all times to live, relate and serve harmoniously. Gandhi’s seven sins include: wealth without work; pleasure without conscience; knowledge without character; science without humanity; business without morality; religion without sacrifice; and politics without principle (Covey, 1991). It is quite noteworthy that all the seven deadly sins are linked to certain human values which is informed by human greed and selfishness, and this has continued to bedevil humankind since sin began. Those who espouse globalization seem to fail to recognize elements of human self-destructive tendencies. The same Covey speaks of the need for “moral compassing”. Human beings need to go beyond being ideologically motivated and values driven towards internalizing the “true north” of magnetic principles which are universal, self-evident, objective, and external. “Such principles reflect natural laws of respect for human beings property, and such laws cannot be violated without violating human beings themselves” (Covey, 1991, p. 94).

It is, perhaps, unfortunate that when the process of globalization kicked in, the main ideology and business philosophy which informed business thinking and activities were capitalistic in ethos. Laissez Faire capitalism, as articulated by its founder, Adam Smith and championed by Milton Friedman, is not compatible with justice. All have to be warned against naked capitalism. It would have been better to read Adam Smith’s book, *The Wealth of the Nations* together with another book by the same author, *The*

Theory of Moral Sentiments. Alas, the second book by Adam Smith is now relegated. For now, the world is on board towards self-destruction by perpetuating socio-economic injustices which call for raising the red flag. Capitalism cannot be just. A simple story of my encounter with an entrepreneur in Southern Africa illustrates the point: he had a small garden of tomatoes which he took to the city market when tomatoes were selling at thirty dollars (\$30) a tray. At less than that the small garden holder could not make much profit considering the inputs to produce the tomatoes he was selling. While this small-scale farmer was in line to deliver the tomatoes a large scale farmer arrived with trucks full of tomato trays. The large scale farmer announced that he could sell his tomatoes at fifteen dollars (\$ 15) a tray. With that the small scale farmer lost business as he was forced to sell his tomatoes at a loss. In principle, that is what capitalism does. Later on I was informed that in the same city, those I knew to be successful business people had packed up because the Chinese had flooded the markets for essential goods with cheap products, and thus collapsing small business enterprises. Globalization drives business today using capitalistic dynamics. It needs to be noted that this assertion is not against “capital”, but has problems with “capitalism.”

Robert and Jean Gilpin (2000) were quite optimistic when global events seemed to favour capitalism. The end of Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the rise of China and Pacific Asia led the Gilpins to assert that the “Second Great Age of Global Capitalism” had been ushered in with tremendous promise of a greater economic future that would unleash economic prosperity for all. That promise has never been fulfilled because, even though enormous wealth has been created. Very few players have a hold on that wealth and the poor continue to get poorer. What the Gilpins say is not true that “a global capitalist economy characterized by unrestricted trade, investment flows, and the international activities of multinational firms will benefit rich and poor alike.” This is, perhaps, an unintended lie that is oblivious to sinful human nature as we have it even today. It may also be a manifestation of a superficial and inadequate analysis of data and other pertinent issues. For years the bigger players—USA, West Europe, and Japan have benefited. East Asia, China and Latin America are also benefiting now as they are taking a meteoric rise to prominence. Unfortunately, up to the turn of the century Africa south of the Sahara’s participation in world

trade was still 1-2%. It is, indeed, a negligible participation, and by default or design, the people of Africa are suffering cultural dislocations and economic deprivations that leads to untold misery.

It may just be mere misperception on the part of those who are anti-globalization, but it is also on record that even some citizens in developed countries are not happy about the way global capitalists are running the world (Gassama, 1997). That was the message which the protesters communicated at that conference by the World Trade Organization at Seattle in 1997. Nevertheless, the sheer treachery on the globe is not just calling for protests. We may take protests as signals that something more socially responsible is needed. The world now needs global moral leaders whose lives, relationships, services and interactions with all human beings transcend petty localism and unjust globalism. Moral leaders who advocate values that are truly universal, global, self-evident and timeless are needed today. The world needs men and women to lead others to accomplish or achieve moral purpose beyond mere conformity to transformation (Hanson, 2006). Such men and women know and understand that they have just one short life which must be urgently maximized and expended with moral purpose and passion (H. & R. Blackaby, 2011). A special woman who lived up to a little over a hundred years , penned a succinct statement on what our world needs:

The greatest want of the world is the want of men; men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their innermost souls are true and honest; men who do not fear to call sin by its right name; men whose conscience is true to duty as the needle to the pole; men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. (White, 1943, p. 57)

There are quite few people of this caliber, and yet, these are the kind of people who influence the world by inspiring people to live, relate, serve, and do business in order to enhance human life.

People on Whom to Build Moral Leadership

This world has been blessed from time to time by those who rise to the stature of casting light as moral leaders. Mahatma Gandhi is on record as a moral leader. His legacy lives on although he died some years ago. The far-reaching global influence of Mahatma Gandhi cannot be fully measures.

It appears like Gandhi’s moral leadership had



impact on people like Martin Luther King Jr of the United States of America and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Martin Luther King Jr had the moral boldness to call his nation “to rise up to live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal’” (Hanson in Rhode, 2006, p. 292). Nelson Mandela pricked the conscience of the world when he declared and took a stand for justice for all humankind globally. He was incarcerated for 27 years because of the cause of justice and fairness to all. When he became the first black president of South Africa he did not relent on justice. He addressed business people and urged them to use their business power as “catalyst for social change” (Hill in Rhode, 2006, p. 284). Contrary to most business philosophers, Mandela believed that there was nothing wrong with capital. Capital “might be owned privately”, he said, but there must be “an institutionalized system of social accountability for the owners of the capital” (Hill in Rhode, 2006, p. 284). Global capitalists who are driven by greed to acquire, accumulate, and consume may mock at Mandela’s assertion, but there is no other way to make this world a better place for every one.

The Emerging Issues in Business Leadership

This paper’s major concern was to address issues which are connected with the trend of globalization. Indeed, issues have emerged and raised ugly heads which cannot be ignored by thinking and concerned men and women who are inhabitants of this world. Business people, and especially those who embrace global capitalism need to temper their capitalistic ideology with sound moral principles that are universal, timeless and self-evident. Among the salient issues which have emerged may be included:

1. The ever-widening economic and social gap between the haves and the have nots.
2. The environmental degradation which is apt to generate diseases and make this world, not only an uncomfortable place to live in, but also an unsafe one.
3. Imbalances connected with movement of intellectual capital. Some people talk about brain drain when they refer to highly skilled people moving away from their homelands to settle in countries where living and working conditions are more conducive to high standard of living.

4. The current wave of global terrorism has made life so insecure. Arjun Appadurai has written a book: *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* in which he links globalization with global terrorism (Appadurai, 2006).

Tactics of suicide bombings are growing and so is rage fomented by against market forces. Anti-Western sentiments do not seem to be subsiding in the Middle East’s radical Islamic world, and it still feels like a new kind of war was declared in 2001 (9/11) when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were hit by terrorists. The world is no longer the same since 9/11. Although terrorists like Osama Bin-Laden who could have master-minded destruction of such magnitude have died, the legacy of terror continues (Appadurai, 2006). I leave in a country that is on its toes because terrorism. We have our West Gate Mall, and now our Garissa colossal tragedy, and these spell havoc that has resulted in trails of human misery. All the issues that are connected with globalization call for global thinking outside the box. There is a need for global cooperation to deal with global evil that seems to have a way with all of us now. There are, of course, more issues which are emerging, but the four which are cited and briefly unpacked here seem to be more pressing.

The Way Forward on Globalization

Since globalization is an unstoppable trend, thinking men and women of this globe need to rise to the occasion of injecting the moral capital to human beings. Each one of us need to own up and work, relate and live to reverse the damages of the fall even in the way we do business.

It is refreshing in some ways to note that some moral leaders have continued to develop what Johnson describes as moral/ethical common ground which applies moral principles in situations of doing business. Many conscientious business leaders have intentionally signed to subject themselves to codes and statutes which address and promote global approach and global regulation. Among the approaches with universal ethics and morality may be included the following:

1. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
2. A Global Ethics;
3. The Global Standards Codex; and
4. The Caux Principles.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains and provides for protection of human freedoms, grants every human being basic rights of being human. It entitles every human person the basic human rights, among which is the right to be treated with dignity as a person of value no matter where the person comes from and whatever social status or condition this person occupies.

A Global Ethic addresses the reality of differences in religious persuasions among human beings. Instead of allowing religious convictions to prevent harmony while living, relating and working together as informed by the Global Ethic. Two universal principles are applied:

1. Every person must be treated humanely regardless of language, skin color, mental ability ; political beliefs; national or social origin.
2. What you wish done to yourself, do to others. (Johnson, 2015, p. 392)

The Global Business Standards Codex, developed by Lynn Paine and colleague at Harvard University argue for world-class corporations to adopt 8 universal and overarching moral and ethical principles which are: fiduciary, property; reliability; transparency; dignity; fairness; citizenship; and responsiveness.

Caux Principles are Round Table principles made up of business executives from USA, Japan, and Europe. These executives meet periodically in Caux, Switzerland to set world standards by which to judge business behavior. The concepts are quite lofty, and they reveal that responsible human are seeking for ways of leading in business in a responsible. They all reveal that it can no longer be just business willy nilly and fail to lead when the trend pushes human beings in one or the other.

Africa and Globalization Emerging Issues

After all is said and done, something needs to be said about the place of Africa and Africans within the ongoing wave of globalization. Two extremes need to be avoided by Africans:

1. To ignore the process of globalization and emphasize the reactionary elements of Afrocentricity. That would be counter-productive because Afrocentrism as it is advocated will not do this time. Those who try to stop or reverse the unstoppable will be overtaken by events while, in vain, they still hope to see the dinosaurs mating as McKenna (1986) put it.

2. Africans must also avoid just riding on the band wagon of globalization without considering the uniqueness of Africanness and African culture. It is unfortunate that the conceptual bridges which can help the African to engage meaningfully and responsibly have been destroyed. Such bridges need to be rebuilt so that Africans do not close doors of immense opportunities that are before them. The continent is blessed with vast expanses of fertile land that can produce food, and yet there are many people who are going hungry in the midst of plenty. There are also colossal resources which the global community needs, and yet many Africans are poor even anthropologically—meaning that they have to do evil in order to survive.

The late Director of Center of Biblical Transformation who was based here in Nairobi referred to the situation in Africa as enigmatic and absurd. Adeyemo (2009) further notes that the continent of Africa is big enough to contain the whole of United States of America, the whole of Europe, the whole of India and China, Argentina and New Zealand. Moreover, the continent is blessed with abundant mineral resources. It has the largest reserves of gold, diamonds, copper, bauxite, manganese, platinum, cobalt, radium and phosphates in the world. It is because of the process of globalization that Africans, who, so far do not participate or are not engaging, are not benefiting from the blessings which God has given to the vast continent. The mineral resources are exploited and shipped away from this continent or exported for processing outside and away from the continent itself. The players in the process of globalization benefit more than the producers of all the raw materials, and the finished products are traded globally, and the original producers end up unable to pay for the finished and processed products. Unless Africa engages in the process of globalization and removes the impediments, including failure to govern and lead the people, the people of Africa will continue to suffer miserably. Professor Lovemore Mbigi of South Africa was writing about African Leadership when he counseled that the continent needs to engage responsibly in the process of globalization. Thus he writes:

In the new millennium we must shift from our global poverty isolation to assertive integration into and co-operation with the global economy. We must protect our African culture, but at the



same time develop a global and cosmopolitan outlook. There is a need to avoid unconsciously giving up on our global citizenship as people who are socially, psychologically, economically, and politically distinct. We have the right to be in Africa and to be Africans, but we do not just want to be on the African soil—we also

want to be part of the heart and pulse of the global society. (Mbigi, 2005, p. 206)

The situation in Africa is such that globalization has created enormous wealth which is monopolized by selected sectors of the global community while Africa, rich as it is, has experienced accelerated decay because of failure to develop policies which lead to adjustments to a changing world of globalization and emerging information society. The same process of globalization weakens sovereignty of national governance in Africa. The systems of governance are too weak to effectively tax multinational corporations which have powers that are beyond those of national government. So, the ineffective and inefficient systems on the African are being relegated and even driven out of existence. This kind of set up is a fundamental tenant of capitalism, and even of global capitalism that is driven by globalization (Mbigi, 2005).

Conclusion

The inevitable and unstoppable process of globalization is here with us and impacting all of us globally. It has gone funky because of the capitalistic ideology that undergirds it. No responsible citizen of this world should allow the wave of globalization to go unabated or unharnessed to extract from it the best of what will benefit humankind globally. Spectators will always lose and perish. In one of his latest books, Pipim (2014) speaks about Africa as a giant elephant which is caged in a mental zoo of wrong conceptualization of what matters in the global village. The giant elephant needs to be liberated. He also likens Africa to a butterfly that was destined to fly, but has so far remained fixated in the earlier stage of its metamorphosis—the caterpillar stage. Pipim further paints a picture of the caterpillar refusing to become a butterfly in spite of all the counsels and warnings until it was gobbled up by other flying birds! Thus he makes a strong point:

None of us can help the fact that the big bird of globalization is here to stay and all sluggish

caterpillars will be gobbled up. It is not our call, and it is certainly a reality that no one can change for you. The best we can do is to sound the alarm to you that the fast-paced world of today has no room for slackers.

The friendliest policies prey on vulnerable slugs that are still in formation. Only those who are able to fly can escape ending up in the stomach of bigger members of the consumption chain that we're all in. (p. 110)

Responsible African thinkers and actors need to engage in the funky situation of globalization and craft a future through strategic partnership with “global players in order to gain access to human performance technology” (Mbigi, 2005, p. 206). There is no option and there is no escape.

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