

# **Africanization of the Management Function for Employability of Graduates From a Selected Institution of Higher Learning in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa**

**Nteboheng Patricia Mefi**  
Walter Sisulu University  
South Africa

**Samson Nambei Asoba**  
Walter Sisulu University  
South Africa

## **Abstract**

With assertions that the management function has been based on a Eurocentric perspective over the years, this study considered the Africanization of management within a selected institution of higher learning in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. This investigation is important following reported educational inadequacies, which have also been associated with poor absorption of university graduates in the labor market evidenced by high rates of unemployment in South Africa. The specific objective of the study was to explore perspectives for improving graduate employability through Africanization of university management. A basic descriptive design was adopted to quantitatively explore perspectives on an Africanized management style that fosters graduate employability in higher education. Data were collected on the agreeableness of respondents to particular statements for an Africanization approach. A Likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the degree of agreeableness on the statements. The questionnaire designed for use in this study was based on the major aim of the study as well as the literature. The results of the study provided evidence that the respondents had high acceptance that the Africanization of the university is related to better employability of graduates. There were strong indications that African principles such as collectivism, ubuntu, respect, and dignity for one another equip students with key traits and attitudes for employability. Additionally, respondents were neutral on many related assertions, which was taken to imply the existence of other factors in graduate employability. The study recommends wider inquiry into the Africanization concept for better understanding and possible adoption.

**Keywords:** Africanization, culture, higher education, management, ubuntu.

## 1. Introduction

Post-apartheid education in South Africa has remained Eurocentric and was not structured from an African perspective (Davids et al., 2021<sup>[101]</sup>). Consequently, it has failed to achieve desired transformation imperatives to address social inequalities, poverty, unemployment, and general economic development. With high levels of unemployment in South Africa, focus is increasing on the educational system and how it is effectively developing graduates needed by industry and those with the right skills for self-employment and entrepreneurship (Olutuase et al., 2020). This has been evidenced by calls for the Africanization and decolonization of the education system (Higgs, 2011; Nyoni, 2019). As provided by Seny et al. (2015), the concept of African management arises from the desire for emancipation, decolonization, and resistance against domination (Msila, 2009).

The case for decolonization of the South African educational system, in particular, became a topical issue which was part of the wave of “Rhodes Must Fall” and “Fees Must Fall” protests during the 2015/2016 academic year. These are sociological views to the education system which incorporate class-based evaluations of the educational system. When the need to transform the higher education management system to contribute to the employability of graduates through Africanization, the key argument involving curriculum shifts, cultural re-adjustments, managerial processes, and philosophies becomes focal (Guthrie, 2015). Another dimension to administrative and managerial theory arose from the writing of Henri Mintzberg, whose managerial roles have also gained prominence. Even though Fayol’s work has remained recognized, Mintzberg’s administrative theory has also remained important in managerial practice. Mintzberg found that managers do not perform specific functions, but actually perform roles which include interpersonal, informational, decisional, and technical functions (Conkright, 2015). In respect of the above, the aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of university managers and administrators in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa on Africanization.

### **African management philosophy in higher education**

Philosophy denotes the worldview or general paradigm which is shared by a group of people and shapes practices and behaviors (Olaniran, 2018). Nyoni (2019) observed that the African management philosophy is complicated and entails elements such as ethnocentrism, sagacity or sage philosophy, a nationalist ideology, as well as criticality or professionalism. These elements dominated in the work of Odera Oruka (cited in Nyoni, 2019), a Kenyan philosopher whose work on an African philosophy gained prominence over the years. The term Africanization relates to a perspective whereby centrality is placed on Africa in relation to developmental practices (Olaniran, 2018). Educational transformation in the post-apartheid era has taken center stage over the years, and Africanization of the higher education system has been an important component within this transformation imperative. As provided in Olaniran (2018), the implication of African management philosophy does not simply mean replacing Eurocentric views; it entails much broader issues in education. Debates on Africanization of educational management has taken on various

dimensions. In South Africa, some scholars have argued for the adoption of ubuntu as the principal component for the Africanization of educational management. Higgs (2011) saw the Africanization of educational management to be related to the emphasis of an African identity in the educational management. The African identity is seen to resolve around resistance to colonization, the adoption of indigenous knowledge systems, and valuing ubuntu behavior.

### **African management philosophy and employability of graduates**

As provided in Nzimakwe (2014), the concept of ubuntu denotes the notion of humanness that encompasses caring and sharing as well as support for one another. In simple terms, ubuntu is against self-centeredness and in favor of collectivism. When this is considered in educational management, it tends to support team-based management styles, which rely on the empowerment of everyone and inclusiveness. This makes it an essential philosophy in addressing such problems as poverty and inequality, which South Africa has been facing hitherto.

## **2. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive design based on the study of perspectives on the Africanization of the management function for employability of graduates from a selected institution of higher learning in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The descriptive design is considered to be a basic quantitative approach in the collection of data. Respondents' degree of agreeableness to particular statements to Africanization was measured using a Likert scale. The Likert scale questionnaire designed for use in this study was based on the major aim of the study as well as the literature. Data were then collected by administering the research instrument to faculty managers, heads of department (HODs), and administrators at the selected university. The respondents were chosen based on their suitability to attend to the emphasis of the study on managers so as to consider the Africanization of the management of university. As such, a convenience and purposive sampling strategy was adopted for the selection of respondents for the study. Ultimately, 15 faculty managers, 32 HODs, and 28 administrators participated in the study and provided data which were analyzed to arrive at the key findings of the study. In total, 75 participants involved in management of the university participated in the study.

## **3. Findings**

Table 1 presents the percentages for responses provided by respondents in respect of the statements on Africanization. The statement on the acceptance that Africanization is still a relevant concept in the present-day management system received notable agreement (60%), while only 3% of respondents disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed. This result demonstrates the acceptance that Africanization is still a crucial component in today's management philosophy despite the changes in both industry and management landscapes. Despite technological advancement and transformations in the various socio-economic components of society, there is still acceptance that Africanization is essential in university management discourse.

**Table 1: Respondent perceptions of Africanization of university management**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
I know the principle of Africanization of higher education	52%	36%	1%	7%	4%
Africanization of higher education management is related to the employability of graduates	27%	33%	27%	7%	7%
Africanization develops graduates with industry-relevant attitudes and personality	3%	24%	40%	13%	20%
South African industries are largely Africanized	7%	13%	47%	20%	13%
Higher education institutions should be at the center of Africanization	16%	11%	47%	13%	13%
Africanization is accepted globally	7%	27%	33%	13%	7%
Adopting the Africanization approach to university management improves the quality of graduates	20%	20%	27%	13%	7%
University leaders who follow the Africanization principle will equip graduates for employability	24%	27%	33%	13%	3%
Africanization in the present age is still relevant	60%	13%	4%	3%	20%
Africanization principles can help reduce unemployment	36%	13%	17%	20%	13%

Note: strongly agree (SD), agree (A), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA)

The data from Table 1 were used to prepare Figure 1, which indicates in graphical form the high level of acceptance that Africanization is still relevant and that this ideology is still well known in the education sector. As provided in Figure 1, negative responses were generally low, showing greater tolerance to the need for Africanization of the management function for the employability of graduates. In cases where there was no considerable agreement to the culture statements, respondents chose to be neutral. Neutral responses in the study were taken to suggest the presence of some underlying factors that affect Africanization, and this limited the agreement from respondents as they felt that there were some other factors that were more powerful than the culture dimension. In particular, a large number of respondents (47%) were neutral in relation to the statement that higher education institutions should be at the center of Africanization. This suggests that being at the center of Africanization could not be considered to be driven by higher education institutions. This was taken to suggest the need for wide and broad involvement of stakeholders in driving the Africanization agenda. The responses implied that other critical stakeholders, such as the government, the community, and the non-governmental sector, were also critical in the development of Africanization. It appears that driving the Africanization agenda in higher education institutions only may not be successful and there seems to be a need for the involvement of many national stakeholders to achieve it. The statement that South African industries are largely Africanized also attracted many (47%) neutral responses. This statement can be considered within South Africa's history of apartheid characterized by the exclusion of people from other cultures (e.g. the African culture) from economic

participation, which resulted in industries being largely Westernized. While the 1994 change of government worked to undo these forms of exclusion and economic inequalities, there are still assertions that little progress has been achieved.

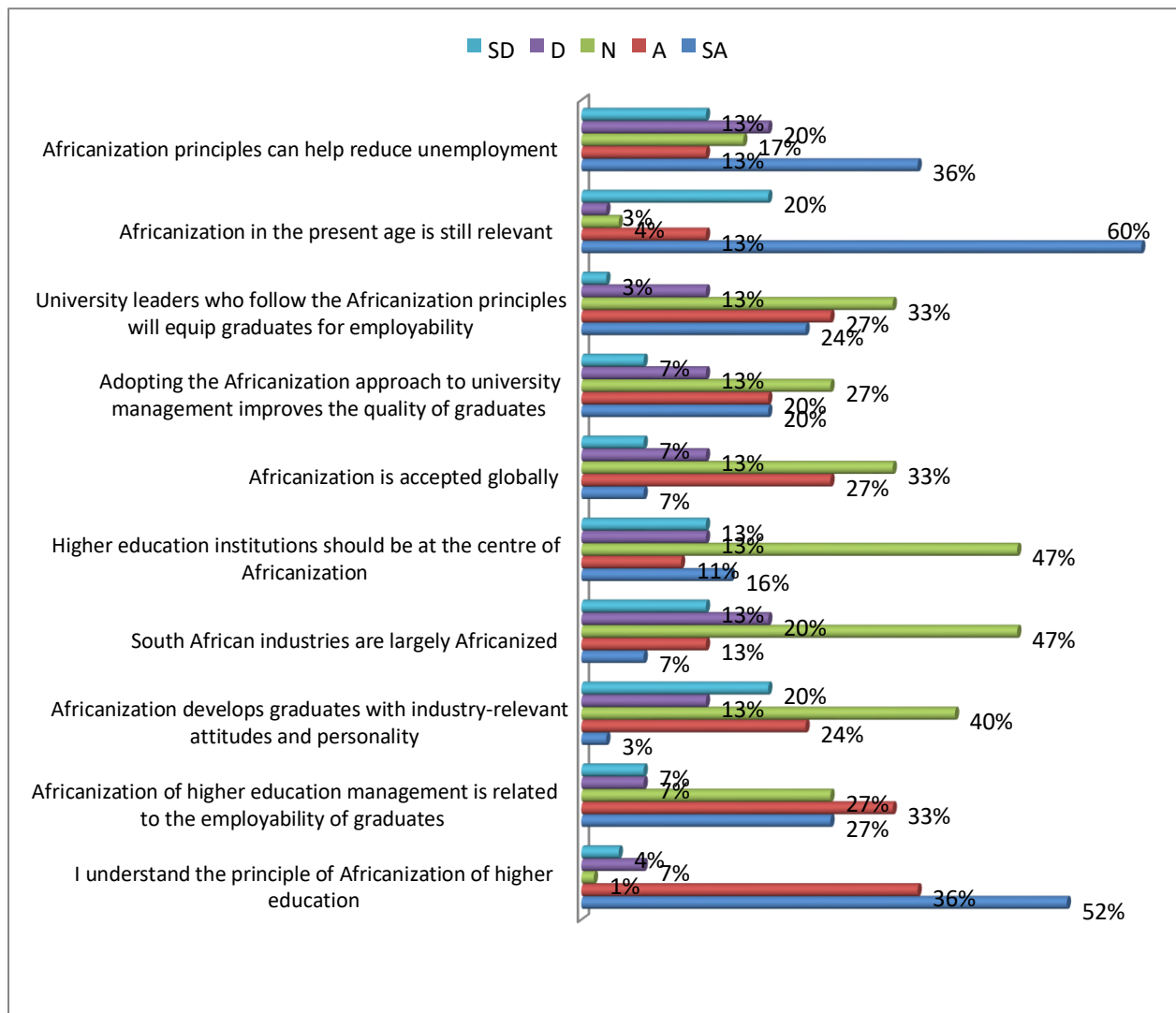


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of findings

#### 4. Conclusions

This study was developed with the specific objective to explore the perspectives for improving graduate employability through Africanization of university management. The literature review that was done in this study was closely echoed by the results of the empirical data, as there were strong indications that Africanization is still considered an important concept in South African educational institutions. Precisely, the concept of ubuntu is considered to be vital in addressing many socio-economic challenges that relate to educational transformation. There were also strong indications that Africanization should be broadly considered, as it should be a society-wide transformation agenda in industry, educational institutions, and society. The study suggested that Africanization of educational institutions may increase employability of graduates if the industry is also Africanized, in which case there must be a close fit between industry requirements and university management.

## 5. References

- Conkright, T. A. (2015). Using the four functions of management for sustainable employee engagement. *Performance Improvement*, 54(8). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21506>
- Guthrie, C. (2015). *Henri Fayol, the manager*. Pickering & Chatto.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315654546>
- Higgs, P. (2011). African philosophy and the decolonisation of education in Africa: Some critical reflections. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(sup2), 37–55.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14695812.2011.00794.x>
- Msila, V. (2009). Africanisation of education and the search for relevance and context. *Educational Research and Review*, 4(6), 310–315.
- Nyoni, J. (2019). Decolonising the higher education curriculum: An analysis of African intellectual readiness to break the chains of a colonial caged mentality. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 4, Article 69. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v4i0.69>
- Nzimakwe, T. I. (2014). Practising ubuntu and leadership for good governance: The South African and continental dialogue. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 7(4), 30–41.
- Olaniran, S. O. (2018). Balancing Africanisation with community education: Implications for achieving the SDG-sustainable cities and communities. *Gender & Behaviour*, 16(3), 12143–12151.
- Olutuase, S. O., Brijlal, P., & Yan, B. (2020). Model for stimulating entrepreneurial skills through entrepreneurship education in an African context. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1786645>
- Seny, K. K. A., Apitsa, S. M., & Adegbite, E. (2015). African management: Concept, content and usability. *Society and Business Review*, 10(3), 258–279.