Chapter 8

Spirited Ubuntu Leadership

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women leaders within the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. The three elements of the conceptual framework: servant leadership, motherhood, and Ubuntu have been unpacked and illustrated in the previous chapter demonstrating their distinctiveness. In this chapter, I focus on illustrating the convergence of these elements in practice, and propose a uniquely African, uniquely Zimbabwean women’s leadership praxis that I have called Spirited Ubuntu Leadership. Toward the end of the chapter, I provide conclusions and implications for further research and leadership praxis.

First, an overview of the purpose of the study, its significance, guiding questions, and literature is used. The conceptual framework of the study comprised three intersecting components: servant leadership, motherhood, and Ubuntu philosophy, with the latter as the engine or driving force that influences servant leaders and motherhood. The purpose of this chapter is to make meaning out of the conceptual framework and summarize the results of the study into a significant decisive model resulting from studying African women NGO leaders. By studying the women in their contextual environments with a consideration of their history and culture, I was able to show the impact of colonization, the war of liberation, transition to independence, and patriarchy on the women’s leadership philosophy.
Themes Converge

The NGO leaders in this study clearly demonstrated that they are servant leaders without describing themselves as such. I regarded them as servant leaders from the metaphors and descriptions of how they lead at home, communities, and workplaces. All women NGO leaders highlighted that their motherhood qualities are transferrable to the workplace and are influenced by their Christian faith and Ubuntu values. The participants indicated that their leadership approaches are unique because of the inherent motherhood skills they transfer to the workplace. The fundamental overarching centrality of the study is that servant leadership, motherhood, and Ubuntu have strong spiritual values.

Servant Leadership

Spears (1996) defined servant leadership as “a model, which puts serving others as the number one priority. Servant leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decision-making” (p. 33). Russell (2001) stated that values are the mainstay of servant leaders because values shape the characteristics of leaders.

Synthesizing the literature on servant leadership, Russell & Stone (2002) highlighted nine functional attributes of servant leaders: vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation, empowerment, and communication and, 11 accompanying attributes: credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation. Servant leadership is a form of values leadership because the proponents of the theory argue that the qualities that servant leaders possess are inherent values and beliefs of individual leaders and they influence or impact their actions (Russell, 2001, pp. 76–79). Even though the women NGO leaders did not use the term servant leader during interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher deduced from their stories that they were indeed servant leaders and they also