Article

Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Educational, Cultural and Philosophical Considerations

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Abstract: Ubuntu has been defined as a moral quality of human beings, as a philosophy or an ethic, as African humanism, and as a worldview. This paper explores these definitions as conceptual tools for understanding the cultural, educational, and philosophical landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. Key to this understanding is the Althusserian concept of state apparatus. Louis Althusser divides the state apparatus into two forces: the repressive state apparatus (RSA); and the ideological state apparatus (ISA). RSAs curtail the working classes, predominately through direct violence or the threat of violence, whereas ISAs function primarily by ideology, including forms of organised religion, the education system, family units, legal systems, trade unions, political parties, and media. This paper discusses the link between increasing inequality in post-apartheid South Africa and education, with specific reference to Althusser's ISAs and the abuse of Ubuntu as a subterfuge for socio-economic inequality.

Keywords: Ubuntu; educational; cultural; philosophical; South Africa; post-apartheid

1. Introduction

In written sources dating back to 1846, Ubuntu has been treated as the moral quality of a human being, as a way of thinking, a philosophy or an ethic, as African humanism, and as a world perspective.

Ubuntu became noteworthy ideationally during times of political upheaval and the demise of racist regimes in Southern Africa. Ubuntu is associated with a political way of thinking or belief system, a contention unequivocally linked to the transformation from White minority rule to Black majority rule, in Zimbabwe and South Africa in particular [1] (p. 34). Of late, the endeavour to recuperate African dignity has been associated frequently with the possibility of an African Renaissance, as propounded especially by South Africa's former President, Thabo Mbeki.

Post-independence leaders in Africa—such as Awolowo, Kaunda, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Senghor and Sekou Toure—postulated a sharp sense of the pragmatic significance of philosophy. Despite the urgencies and demands of postcolonial reconstruction, these post-independence leaders have given diligent consideration and thought to the philosophical bases of their projects. Thus, for example, whereas it may be debatable whether Nkrumah fully grasped the exigencies of the hypothesis-to-praxis relation, there can be no gainsaying his enthusiastic and sincere commitment to the philosophical foundations of postcolonial governance [2] (p. 322).

Sotiris [3] (pp. 96–97), in referring to critical educational theory, contends that such theory adequately expounded and covered inquiries concerning social class. Regarding education as a system which reproduces class divisions, chain of command (hierarchy), and lack of equality, this has been a key factor informing radical critical work on education.

Scrutiny of the role of education, and especially higher education, in the reproduction of class relations has been both a theoretical precept and a political tenet in challenges pertaining to access to education, finance, and syllabi. These are challenges that require change and reform in education aimed at undermining the replication of class divisions [3].

Colonialism generally viewed African cultures with disdain. Wiredu [2] contends that, in many post-independence contexts, it was expected of Africans to genuinely reassert their indigenous lifeways and culture. That is, these reassertions were expected to be genuine, and not just cosmetic changes to the national fabric of many African nations. National rebuilding is viewed by many as a socially and culturally esteemed endeavour. For many nations when they gained independence, the path of least resistance was to follow the societal frameworks bequeathed by the colonial powers. These, then, became blemished duplicates of the governance structures of the colonial states. However, the leaders mentioned above had an astute sense of the significance of cultural identity and did not opt for that simple choice. They comprehended that colonial state architectures ought to be inspected and assessed from an Africanist position. Furthermore, they saw that any such inspection and assessment had to be rooted philosophically.

Nkrumah and Nyerere left a heritage of philosophy, although they had divergent approaches in the quest for African authenticity. Nkrumah borrowed unreservedly from the Western way of thinking. He considered himself a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist, and saw no logical inconsistencies in that combination. Nyerere borrowed less, but he too was shaped by Western thinking. He was a committed Catholic who was wary of Marxism. The European influences in the thought of Nkrumah and Nyerere were often at odds with African authenticity, especially since their social philosophies were embraced after considerable thought and reflection. Nyerere contends that the genuine African socialist does not think of one class of men as his brethren and another as his foes [4] (p. 7). The individual does not enter a coalition with the "brethren" for the elimination of the "non-brethren", but sees human beings as belonging to an extended family. African socialism (Ujamaa) thus is not established upon the basis of class struggle but upon harmony within the extended family.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this paper is to discuss the link between increasing inequality in post-apartheid South Africa and education, with specific reference to Louis Althusser's ISAs and the abuse of Ubuntu as a subterfuge for socio-economic inequality. More than two decades after the demise of apartheid, the South African school system is dysfunctional, under-resourced, and produces learners who are underprepared for tertiary education (through no fault of their own).

3. Literature Review

Ubuntu has been the subject of extensive scholarly investigations across various academic disciplines. Numerous studies have explored its application as an authentic philosophical framework to promote coexistence, social cohesion, and inclusivity in education [5]. Some have delved into the amalgamation of Ubuntu's humanistic ethos with some aspects of Eurocentric, Western, positivistic paradigms, forging a comprehensive educational framework that accentuates human connections and interdependence [6]. Additionally, researchers have examined the globalization of Ubuntu's educational and liberating tenets, aiming to reshape educational systems in favour of multicentric knowledge and more inclusive social wellbeing platforms [7]. Ubuntu's integration into post-apartheid South African schools, its potential advantages for students, and its influence on desegregated schools have also been explored [8].

Moreover, the utilization of Ubuntu's principles that emphasise human unity, empathy, sharing, and cooperation, in the context of global peace education and conflict resolution has been investigated [9]. In a similar vein, other studies have advocated for the incorporation of Ubuntu's principles and values to propose a holistic approach to childhood education,

preparing children for responsible adulthood and global citizenship [10]. Furthermore, Ubuntu has been embraced as a strategy for effective classroom management [11], and examined for its manifestations in post-colonial education policies in Southern Africa [12]. Ubuntu's significance was also scrutinised in educational management and leadership restructuring during democratic transformations in South Africa, including its role in technical and vocational education and training colleges [13]. In addition to the above educational contexts, Ubuntu has been investigated in the domain of social work education and practice, both in Africa and beyond [14,15].

Apart from education, Ubuntu has been the subject of numerous scholarly investigations, which have explored the concept as an African ethical vision [16] and as a normative ethical theory poised to influence the global institutional order, fostering the common good of the global human community [17]. Moreover, studies have dealt with Ubuntu's significance in fostering harmony within South Africa and other African nations, with an emphasis on conciliation over confrontation [18]. It has also been examined for its potential in countering violence, particularly in the context of xenophobic violence in South Africa [19].

Ubuntu's relevance extends to global justice and human rights more broadly, as explored in the work of Mojola [20], as well as its potential to contribute to global solidarity [21]. Further investigations have probed Ubuntu as a philosophical framework for guiding life and social ethics, as well as a political philosophy [22]. Ubuntu has also been studied in the context of its applicability in the indigenization of corporate strategies in Africa [23].

Recent research has explored Ubuntu's role as a tool for intercultural dialogue, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic [24]. Additionally, Ubuntu has been considered a means for survival during relocation to foreign countries [25]. Notably, empirical studies have employed Ubuntu-based approaches to theory building in the field of public relations within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa [26], as well as in the domain of diplomacy [27].

This paper draws on the various definitions of Ubuntu as conceptual tools for understanding the cultural, educational, and philosophical landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. Key to this understanding is the Althusserian concept of state apparatus. That is, this paper discusses the link between increasing inequality in post-apartheid South Africa and education, with specific reference to Althusser's ISAs and the abuse of Ubuntu as a subterfuge for socio-economic inequality. Hence, analytic philosophy is an appropriate methodological framework for this study, given its dedication to lucidity, logical analysis, and precision in addressing intricate philosophical and conceptual matters. Given the diverse definitions and interpretations of Ubuntu in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, a methodological approach is necessary to bring clarity and rigorous analysis to these concepts and their implications. In the following sections, this study explores Ubuntu in the South African context, considers its various dimensions as articulated by influential philosophers, politicians, and religious scholars. Subsequently, it employs Althusser's concept of state apparatus to gain insight into the political economy of Ubuntu in post-apartheid South Africa. The discussion concludes with recommendations for the effective integration of Ubuntu into the South African educational system, ensuring a just, inclusive socio-cultural responsive pedagogy.

4. Ubuntu in South Africa

The reference to former African intellectual giants serves to emphasise the present South African turn to an Ubuntu, which shows attributes of previous post-colonial themes of return. The multi-party negotiation process ushered in the promulgation of South Africa's first democratic constitution on 18 November 1993 and led to South Africa's first free and fair election on 27 April 1994. In its postamble, the 1993 Constitution describes itself as "a historic bridge" away from politically sanctioned racial segregation to democracy, human rights, and the like. It also proclaims that, in dealing with the discord and conflict

of the past, "there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for Ubuntu but not for victimisation".

Interestingly, the 1996 Constitution does not make any explicit reference to Ubuntu. Still, at least 18 Constitutional Court decisions mention or apply the term, even if they do not explain the rationale for its inclusion in the first place. Lötter [28] states that Ubuntu implies that one becomes an individual through other individuals. Amongst the comparative echoes which emerged during the 2000s was that Ubuntu is the short form of a longer isiXhosa proverb in Southern Africa, namely, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which signifies that a person is an individual only through interactions with other individuals [29]. According to Gade [30], it was between 1993 and 1995 that Ubuntu first became associated with the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. If Gade is correct, the term and the proverb became closely connected within the space of only a few years.

As in the rest of Africa, themes of return emerged in relation to the end of apartheid in South Africa. It is contended frequently that, in confronting the divisions and hardships of the apartheid period, South African society needs to recover the soul and spirit of Ubuntu, which—as asserted by the Constitutional Court [31]—is expressive of "the deep cultural heritage of the majority of the population". The Constitutional Court has stated further, in *S v Makwanyane and Another* 1995 (6) BCLR 665 (CC) [32], that: it was against the background of the loss of respect for human life and the inherent dignity which attaches to every person that a spontaneous call has arisen among sections of the community for a return to Ubuntu.

It has been claimed regularly that Ubuntu was entrenched in African society prior to the advent of colonialism. Roederer and Moellendorf [33] posit that: The Nguni word Ubuntu represents notions of universal human interdependence, solidarity and communalism which can be traced to small-scale communities in pre-colonial Africa, and which underlie virtually every indigenous African culture.

This understanding of Ubuntu gained ground in South Africa during the 1990s and the term became closely connected to the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. Was the link between Ubuntu and the proverb drawn because Ubuntu is intrinsic to an interconnectedness that could have been harnessed by government officials, politicians, and others as a weapon against the ideologies of racism and apartheid? Linking Ubuntu with precepts of interconnectedness meant that these precepts gained authenticity (or further authenticity) among Africans, who consider Ubuntu to be acceptable and embedded in their way of life. Nelson Mandela provided his own interpretation of the concept, saying:

> A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he did not have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food and attend him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not address themselves. The question therefore is: are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?[1]

In a sense, Mandela's understanding of Ubuntu is notably context specific and deeply rooted in the historical narrative of South Africa's search for reconciliation and equity. Therefore, its understanding needs to be contextualised within the framework of South African history and culture. His definition of the concept encapsulates the fundamental principles of community and interconnectivity. It emphasizes that individuals exist not in isolation but as integral components of a broader societal tapestry in which each individual has a shared responsibility towards the welfare of other members of the community.

For Desmond Tutu, there is harmonious coexistence between Ubuntu and religion, a harmony that is not just a logical construct, but also firmly grounded in his African Christian background. In his view, Ubuntu is the art or virtue of being human; it underscores the significance of mutual respect, dignity, brotherhood, and community in human relations. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of human beings, where one's humanity is realised through interactions with others. This aspect of Ubuntu aligns with religious teachings. Additionally, Tutu's approach to the concept of Ubuntu is universal. For him, Ubuntu is an inclusive and overarching philosophy that transcends racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and

cultural boundaries. Tutu applies the concept in the context of Christianity and deems it as an expression of this divine and universal Ubuntu.

In the history of Islam, the Christian King of Aksum provided refuge to early Muslim immigrants who had fled persecution in Mecca. The King's protection of Muslims during this event aligns with the broader principles of humanity, compassion, and community that are central to Ubuntu. While the concept of Ubuntu as it is understood today may not have existed in the early days of Islam or in the Kingdom of Aksum, there are certainly common underlying principles that emphasise the significance of community, compassion, and the interconnectedness of humanity, which are embodied in the historical actions of the then-king of Abyssinia. The Prophet Muhammad saw the suffering and tribulation some of his followers endured and advised them to seek refuge in Abyssinia, describing it as a land of virtue ruled by a just Christian king, under whom no one was treated unfairly. In a similar vein, while there is no direct Islamic equivalent to Ubuntu, numerous Islamic principles and concepts share similarities with the underlying values of Ubuntu, including, *Ummah* (community), *sadaqah* (charity) and *zakat* (almsgiving), *rahma* (mercy), *Ihsan* (excellence in character) and *sulh* (reconciliation).

Tutu's utilization of Ubuntu in the process of reconciliation and rehabilitation during the post-apartheid era in South Africa has been highly commendable. His approach effectively balances the objectives of healing, rectifying historical imbalances, and repairing fractured relationships. Tutu's methodology serves as a compelling illustration of the transformative potential of Ubuntu, as it advocates for the reintegration of both victims and perpetrators into the community, thereby facilitating forgiveness and reparative actions. In his distinction between retributive justice and restorative justice, he argues that the latter was central to traditional African jurisprudence. As he points out:

> Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment, but in the spirit of Ubuntu, the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence [34] (pp. 51–52).

Hence, Ubuntu is not restricted to a singular, rigid definition but is a dynamic and evolving philosophy that encompasses a spectrum of interpretations, connotations and meanings. Its adaptability allows it to tackle a variety of contemporary issues and challenges. Additionally, this flexibility and eclectic nature imply that its application can vary widely depending on the cultural, social, legal, political and historical context. Consequently, Ubuntu represents a broad set of ideals about human coexistence and community, lending itself to a multitude of interpretations and applications. Regrettably, the South African state failed to imbue these ideals of Ubuntu with real content, opting instead for neo-liberal economic policies which run counter to solidarity, communalism, and universal human interdependence. In particular, through its various organs, the State has conducted itself contrary to its rhetoric and public pronouncements that use Ubuntu and its ideals to pursue a neo-liberal project. In particular, the State's use of force (i.e., the reaction to countrywide service protests from the Mbeki presidency to the present), its interference with the freedom of the press, and its denialism and shifting of blame for its failures.

5. Ideological State Apparatuses

Althusser's concept of state apparatus is crucial for understanding the political economy of Ubuntu in post-apartheid South Africa. Marx principally analysed the role of capital and economics in maintaining ideology, in the sense that a definitive state of production is the reproduction of the conditions of production. For Althusser, by contrast, the reproduction of the conditions of production is not ensured merely by propagating existing material conditions; rather, such reproduction is also accomplished outside the sphere of production, through the state apparatus [35].

Althusser bifurcates the state apparatus into the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatus (ISA). RSAs subjugate the working classes predominantly

through direct violence or the threat of violence. ISAs cannot be unified as easily into one cumulative force, as they originate primarily from various sources in the private sector. In any case, separating RSAs from ISAs exclusively based on the divide between the public and private spheres is problematic; for example, the media, which Althusser characterises as a component of the private sphere, in actuality traverses both spheres. Be that as it may, whereas RSAs function for the most part by violence, ISAs function primarily by ideology, the latter including forms of organised religion, the education system, family units, legal systems, trade unions, political parties, and the media [36]. This paper discusses the link between increasing inequality in post-apartheid South Africa and education, with specific reference to Althusser's ISAs and the abuse of Ubuntu as a subterfuge for socio-economic inequality.

Testing the usage of the post-1990 definitions by the state and its performance in real terms ought to occur in the context of the social, financial, and economic matrix in South Africa. Central to this study's argument is that the political transformation agreed upon in 1994 was not the precursor to a social, financial, and economic revolution. In consequence, the post-apartheid state remains a capitalist state and its economic future is tied to global constraints [37]. An indisputable expression of the current crisis of capitalism in South Africa is the growing class inequality [38]. From a Marxist point of view,

> the primary analytical injunction in this regard is to transcend the notion of exceptionalism, which is attributed routinely to the South African 'miracle', and to perceive that the demise of apartheid did not entail any fundamental transformation in the socio-economic rudiments of the country. If anything, the political transformation in South Africa has foregrounded the capitalist character of the country, which had been camouflaged for so long beneath the canopy of institutionalised racism [37] (pp. 101–106).

Althusserian insights into the constitution of the capitalist state apparatus can provide significant insights into the character of the South African crisis. As intimated above, Althusser proposes that the bourgeoisie retains power by utilising both RSAs—which deploy agencies of force against proletarian resistance—and ISAs—which combine to keep the proletariat in a condition of illusionary class consciousness. For example: Althusser [2] [35] (pp. 10) tells us that: what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number one, i.e., as its dominant ISA, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ISA, the Church.

Whether they are workers who leave the educational institutions early or members of the petty bourgeoisie who leave after acquiring their degrees, it is through education that individuals enter the workplace with the belief system (ideology) essential for the reproduction of the socio-economic system. Each mass ejected en route is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfil in class society [35] (p. 105).

Various ISAs add to the replication of the predominant belief system or ideology. However, no other ISA has the obligatory (and not least of all, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven [35] (p. 105). Places of learning systematically conceal their function as purveyors of:

> an ideology which represents the school as a neutral environment purged of ideology (because it is lay), where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them (in complete confidence) by their 'parents' (who are free, too, i.e., the owners of their children) open up for them the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating virtues' [35] (pp. 105–106).

This ideology is ubiquitous and hegemonic. So inescapable is its reach that, according to Althusser: those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology, the system and the practices in which they are trapped. . .are a kind of hero [35] (p. 106).

Such is the nature of the educational system as a prime ISA of the capitalist mode of production.

6. Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Despite education in South Africa being a site of social and political struggle during the apartheid era, after 1994, transformation in the sector has been primarily at the policy level. The transformation imperatives for the post-apartheid education system envisaged the restoration of traditional values which had been systematically sidelined in African society during apartheid and colonialism. In this regard, much attention was given to rejuvenating Ubuntu, as a priority, not only in education but also in business and the emerging democracy as a whole. The potential of Ubuntu to transform society through infusion into the curricula of public schools was widely vaunted.

However, the actual infusion of Ubuntu in the national school educational plan in the initial post-apartheid years was scant. Jansen [40] (p. 57) contends that syllabi adjustments which occurred during this period had less to do with the school educational plans than with the designs of a state seeking authenticity (legitimacy). Post-1994 educational syllabi included debunked racial material as well as obsolete subject matter. Jansen calls attention to the scurry with which the South African state pursued a shallow purifying of the acquired apartheid syllabi and curricula, a pursuit which should be understood in the context of transition [40]. Jansen [40] (pp. 64–65) points out that educational modifications following South Africa's first democratic elections may be comprehended in the following terms:

(a)　emerging restrictive conditions in the context of constitutional and bureaucratic imperatives of the political terms of the Government of National Unity;
(b)　development of post-apartheid syllabi in terms of poor political leadership;
(c)　the restructuring of the syllabi pressurised by the media; and
(d)　poor political challenges to the development of post-apartheid syllabi by educators themselves [41].

In March 1997, the first post-apartheid Ministry of Education rolled out Curriculum 2005, which commenced in 1998 for grade 1 learners. The educational programme concentrated on general education and training (GET) and subsequently was reworked as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for GET. This educational plan was intended to supplant content-based instruction with outcome-based instruction, focusing on learner-centred pedagogy. The plan was also intended to replace instructor-focused teaching methods with more learner-focused teaching methods. A key change was the removal of forty-two school subjects, and the identification of eight learning areas—incorporating older subjects—apparently to advance an increasingly all-encompassing and incorporated methodology. Each learning zone had syllabi directed results which learners ought to accomplish through learning activities.

Since the progressive implementation of Curriculum 2005, it has undergone several modifications. The changes and the process attached thereto were the result of robust debate, discussion, and contestation regarding the benefits and merits of outcome-based education (OBE) (see, for instance, [42]). There were additional concerns surrounding the educational challenges faced by the children of impoverished Black communities in townships and rural schools. In response, the then-Minister of Education commissioned a review of Curriculum 2005. The review committee undertook in loco inspections of schools which enabled it to furnish several recommendations. For instance, the Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 pointed out that township schools lacked infrastructure and resources—such as textbooks, stationery, and technological tools—needed to deliver Curriculum 2005 [43]. Additionally, the reviewers studied the literature on Curriculum 2005 and considered submissions by individuals and organisations.

These processes have significance for the General Education and Training (GET) band. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa has three categories or bands. These are: the GET band, composed of pre-school, elementary school, and middle school (grades 0–9); the Further Education and Training (FET) band, composed of senior

secondary school (grades 10–12); and the Higher Education and Training (HET) band, composed of universities and former technikons. By 2006, in the FET band a new national educational plan (curriculum) was being gradually implemented. This resulted in the formal removal of technikons, and the emergence of universities of technology, as well as several mergers. A key feature for FET, in terms of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), is that it is premised upon "valuing indigenous knowledge systems" (DoE 2003: 4). This premise posits that indigenous knowledge systems in the South African setting indicate substantial knowledge within African philosophy and societal practices that have developed over centuries (DoE 2003: 4).

Regrettably, more than two decades after the demise of apartheid, the South African school system is dysfunctional, under-resourced, and produces learners who are underprepared for tertiary education (through no fault of their own). The transition from Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and National Curriculum Statements (NCS) to the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in South Africa has been fundamentally underpinned by the philosophy of Ubuntu. These reform documents were initiated to address the inequities rooted in the apartheid era, aiming to foster social justice through education. However, despite the post-apartheid adoption of Ubuntu as the overarching reform philosophy for education, Ubuntu has not gained a foothold in the classrooms, with knowledge and classroom practice largely a legacy of the past. Teachers themselves lack the knowledge and values of Ubuntu and consequently fail the intended policy of Ubuntu to transform education. Moreover, the implementation of Ubuntu in educational settings has not been uniformly effective. This inadequacy is particularly evident in the failure to inculcate values of compassion and humaneness in schools across South Africa. For instance, certain schools in KwaZulu-Natal have been noted for their insufficient psychosocial support to orphaned and vulnerable children. This shortfall is attributed to the gradual erosion of Ubuntu values, overshadowed by westernization and urbanization [44]. The situation is further exacerbated by incidents where teachers' demeaning remarks undermine the dignity of students, especially those benefiting from school-feeding schemes [45]. Such attitudes not only foster a sense of disrespect among students but also contribute to unequal personal development, eroding their confidence and academic performance. This lack of effective Ubuntu implementation in education has far-reaching consequences. Students, having navigated an education system that claims to be transformed by Ubuntu yet fails to actualise its principles, often struggle in higher education settings. This struggle perpetuates the disparities reminiscent of the apartheid era. As de Clerq [46] (p. 9) contends "...around 80% of schools perform badly compared with the functional 20% of schools, and 80% of the maths matric distinctions come from the top 200 (out of 6600) secondary schools". Despite the state's assertions that educational reforms inspired by Ubuntu ensure equality and quality for all, the reality reveals a dual system. This system predominantly benefits a small percentage of schools, leaving the majority to grapple with the challenges of delivering quality education. This situation underscores the critical need for a more authentic and effective integration of Ubuntu principles into South Africa's education system.

Empathy in the context of Ubuntu and the communal goal extended to students during the COVID-19 pandemic shift and thereafter was to ensure adequate provision of academic support to enable students to continue with their studies. Lawanson and Gede [47] contend that the place of educational facilities in the development of students is vital, and schools and universities must ensure adequate provision thereto. During COVID-19, the lack of computers and the failure of many academic facilities to respond to new learning methods was a deep-seated challenge [48–50]. Dube [48] confirmed that students from rural areas who are also attending rural universities are facing a serious challenge in coping with the use and lack of internet connectivity, and resources thereto. There is no doubt that these tools were needed by students during COVID-19 and have continued to be thereafter. Some of the universities in South Africa provided laptops and data for internet, as well as institutional VPNs to students, but our observations and encounters with some students

indicated that some of them were and remain excluded in the distribution process of such resources. In this case, it would be more productive if universities could extend empathy by deliberately identifying the needy among students. This is one of the principles of Ubuntu which is regarded as the purpose of achieving a communal goal. The communal goal, in this case, is student success; students' success reflects more broadly in university productivity.

What, then, are potential pathways to quality education through Ubuntu-style education and inclusive socio-cultural responsive pedagogy? This study advocates applying Ubuntu-style education rooted in the South African context without the pretensions of grand policy but anchored in transformative praxis. This is needed to guarantee education as the extraordinary equaliser in learning spaces in which six instances of inclusive and socio-cultural responsive guidance might be used:

(a) Socio-cultural responsiveness should be underpinned with care in learning spaces. While numerous teachers/educators accept caring to be intrinsic to successful and effective educating, most cannot characterise or portray it plainly. Structured thinking and best practices confirm the constructive outcome of caring learning spaces on student success. What, then, are the particular qualities of a caring educator? Research [51,52] confirms that what educators perceive and accept about their students directly influences the quality of their teaching in learning spaces. It also presages how Ubuntu pedagogy focuses on the development of socio-cultural responsive and caring learning spaces. Thus, for example, Gay is of the view that socio-culturally responsive and caring learning spaces are those in which educators practice tolerance for all students, paying little attention to their socio-cultural background and aptitude. Such spaces reward and acknowledge perseverance and resoluteness of students to keep working irrespective of the challenges and frustration they may face, assist and encourage students' capacity to comprehend new material, and approve and recognise the value and estimation of each student in their learning spaces [53];

(b) Incorporation of education, care, and training for children during their formative years: This can be achieved through the establishment of Ubuntu-centred schools and learning environments that foster communal responsibility for children's education, care, and training. An Ubuntu-centred learning environment not only involves teachers but also parents, extended family members, and the entire community. Additionally, it is essential to provide adequate attention to early childhood education programs that are likely to promote the holistic development of a child, emphasising the interconnected nature of a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive needs;

(c) Achieving powerful equitable education through the incorporation of first language in teaching: To this end, the adoption of bilingual or multilingual approaches is necessary. Students should be given the choice to learn in their home language and to be gradually introduced to education in a second language should it be necessary. Teachers should be provided with proper training that enables them to teach effectively in multilingual and multicultural environments;

(d) Socially, culturally diverse curriculum content: That is, the syllabus/curriculum should be designed in a way that reflects the cultural diversity of South African community and traditions, values, and historical experiences. The involvement of the community in shaping the curriculum is essential;

(e) Inclusion of students with disabilities: An inclusive education system that integrates students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms is urgently needed. Such a system will definitely foster a greater sense of belonging, compassion, and shared humanity. This inclusive system should utilise state-of-the art technology to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Moreover, it should pay attention to the training of teachers and educators to effectively accommodate diverse learning needs, including special needs students;

(f) Progressive methods of teaching for students despite their impecuniosity. Teachers are encouraged to use differentiated instruction methods that appeal to various learning

styles and adapt to the needs of various categories of students. The fact that a considerable number of South African learners are impecunious necessitates the adoption of flexible learning modes, such as hybrid and online classes, the development of scholarship schemes, and the introduction of financial aid initiatives with a view to support underprivileged learners and accommodating their work and family commitments. Resource equity plays a vital role in the achievement of the above goals. In other words, schools and learning centres should have access to essential resources irrespective of their economic status or location.

Collectively, these approaches could constitute a path to restoring Ubuntu as an authentic ethos for a progressive South African education.

7. Conclusions

This paper has examined the multifaceted concept of Ubuntu and its various interpretations as a moral quality, philosophy, ethic, African humanism, and worldview. These diverse definitions were used as conceptual tools to explore the intricate cultural, educational, and philosophical landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. A crucial aspect of this examination has been the incorporation of Louis Althusser's concept of state apparatus, which differentiates between the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatus (ISA). While RSAs wield control through direct or threatened violence, ISAs largely operate through ideological means, encompassing the education system, religion, trade unions, legal structures, political parties, and the media.

Additionally, this paper has explored the link between the escalating levels of inequality in the post-apartheid era and the educational system within the South African context. It has paid special attention to Althusser's ISAs and the role they play in perpetuating socio-economic disparities. Ubuntu, which embodies values of compassion, empathy, and community, has been used and misused as a smokescreen to cloak and conceal the underlying issues of inequality.

This study advocates for a more rigorous and nuanced examination of the applications of Ubuntu, with the aim of fostering genuine equity and justice in post-apartheid South Africa. This paper contends that recognising the potency of ideology alone may prove insufficient. Achieving a more equitable and just society necessitates a concerted effort to challenge and reshape prevailing ideologies. The improper or superficial application of Ubuntu in tackling educational disparities and socio-economic inequality reflects a large issue: the difficulty of aligning traditional values with contemporary socio-political and economic conditions. For Ubuntu to be genuinely effective, it must be embedded within a framework that recognizes and actively addresses systemic inequalities, rather than being used as a soothing philosophy that conceals deeper issues. This necessitates a commitment to not only uphold the principles of interconnectedness and mutual support, but also to enact tangible policies aimed at addressing the root causes of educational disparities and inequality.

Notes

1　　File:Experience Ubuntu.ogg

2　　Althusserianism has had a turbulent and tragic history. Its fall was as disastrous as its rise was sensational. However, the intellectual component of Althusser's work was always oriented towards the political. What is more, many topics investigated in Althusser's work, for example: the critique of essentialism, humanism, teleology, and philosophy of the subject, were in significant reference to philosophical discourse. Recently there has been a revival of interest in Althusser's thought. Primarily, this is because of the prominence of Althusser's previous students and others influenced by him, such as Butler, Badiou, Balibar, Laclau, Macherey Rancière and Žižek [39].

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