Behind the Miracle: Emerging Insights from South African Business Leadership Experiences

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The decade preceding the end of apartheid in South Africa (SA) represents a period of remarkable national leadership, and atypical business leadership. Insights from these extraordinary business leadership experiences largely remain in the form of uncaptured oral histories. Yet they are inspiring stories of practices and principles of truly responsible leadership. This study begins to unveil some of the insights emerging from a multi-year inquiry into the nature of this lived experience of business leadership.

Key words: Change, Diversity, Leadership, Ethics

Who will forget the unending lines of South Africans (SA) as they gathered with such order, dignity and jubilation on April 4, 1994 to mark the country's first free elections? Behind these lines are many histories of remarkable and atypical business leadership.

This paper begins to tell the story of the leadership experience, spanning the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, of a particular group of SA business leaders. It highlights some of the emerging insights on the role and nature of this unique lived experience of SA business leadership by way of the following parts. First, it describes the purpose, research questions and methodological considerations relevant to the study. Second, it provides an overview of the context in which the study is situated. Next, 16 thematic insights that have emerged from the initial data analysis are presented, six of which are discussed. Finally, implications of the study for future research and practice are briefly highlighted, together with how the study contributes to new knowledge in HRD.

The Study

Its Purpose

Using a multi-year interpretive and descriptive phenomenological approach, the study was initiated and designed in June of 2002, with the first set of data collected between May and August of 2003. Subsequent data collection is ongoing. The objectives of the study are twofold: 1) to reveal and understand the nature and role of the decade-long business leadership experience of a particular group of South African business leaders who played an instrumental role in the political, economic and social change necessary to move to a post-apartheid South Africa; and 2) to use the insights and understanding to inform, adapt and develop leadership and change-leading theory, research and practice in the wider business, national and international contexts.

The Research Questions

Two key research questions informed and directed the study: 1) What was the lived experience of this particular group of South African business leaders during the mid-1980s to mid-1990s?; and 2) What insights describe the nature of this particular experience of business leadership during the formative years of their involvement? A third question, What insights exemplify the value-driven nature of this lived experience of business leadership?, informed the findings presented in this particular representation of the study.

Methodology

This study used a naturalistic, interpretive and descriptive phenomenological approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Dooley & Lynham, 2003), aimed at understanding and revealing the essences of the lived experiences of business leadership in South Africa by the targeted participant group and during the selected time period and context. Van Manen (1990) highlights eight essences integral to this type of inquiry:

1) the study of lived experience; 2) the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness; 3) the study of essences...asking for the very nature of a phenomenon; 4) the description of the experiential meanings we live and as we live them; 5) the human scientific study of phenomena; 6) the attentive practice of thoughtfulness; 7) a search for what it means to be human; and 8) a peotizing activity in which it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or summary. (pp. 9-13)

Given these essences made explicit, phenomenological inquiry tends to be rich in spirituality, has its own rhythm and an artful nobleness to its intent (Dooley & Lynham, 2003) and was thus thought to be particularly suited to this study.

Participants

The organization that is the focus of this study of business leadership experience in South Africa (SA), and from which the participants were purposefully drawn, was conceptualized in the early 1980's, formalized in the late 1980's, and disbanded in the mid-1990's. The vision of a handful of powerful and influential business leaders, membership eventually grew to 113. "…Formed by concerned business leaders with a national rather than a parochial agenda, and with a vision for SA based on strong values and principles" (IP3, 08/07/94, p.1), the purpose of this organization was to "…[challenge] South African business people to 'define the real nature of their own power, and to identify how they [could] best use this not inconsequential power to advance the society towards non-racial democracy'" (Nel, 1988, as cited in Terreblance, 2002, p. 79). In 1994 it was awarded *Business Statesman of the Year* by the Harvard Business School Club of SA--the first time this award was made to an organization and not an individual. In 1991 it was singled out by Mr. Nelson Mandela as the organization best suited to facilitate the multilateral constitutional negotiations leading up to SA's first free and democratic election. This organization clearly "made a real and permanent contribution to the well-being of the people and to the development of Southern Africa" (Andrews, 1994, p. 1).

Nineteen participant interviews constitute the study data to date. Participant selection occurred primarily through the use of purposeful, snowball sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Spradley, 1979) and were selected based on their ability to inform four distinct perspectives on the business leadership experience under study: 1) those instrumental in the formation of the organization; 2) those who worked for and joined the organization once it had been formalized; 3) those who were involved in carrying out its role as facilitator of the multilateral constitutional negotiations; and 4) those who, although not direct members, had ongoing dealings and experience with the organization, providing invaluable outside-looking-in perspectives on this experience. The five participant voices used to inform this write-up of the study outcomes all fall within the first group and represent the pioneers of the vision and leadership that constituted the formative years of this organization.

At the unanimous request of the study participants, it must be stressed that in telling this story there is no intent to claim special recognition for the role played by this organization in the remarkable journey towards a new, democratic and free SA. This outcome was clearly the result of countless groups and individuals--people and organizations who put aside their differences and worked together *for the love of a country* in which all could enjoy freedom, prosperity, happiness, growth and development for generations to come. We will probably never know all that was done, nor all who were involved in the pursuit of this noble end. Clearly many paid an incredible price to bestow this national gift. We hope that as we begin to tell this particular story of South African business leadership that it will inspire the sharing of others yet to be told.

The Research Team

The study is being conducted by three researchers, two based at a Research One university in the U.S. and one at a leading research university in SA. The research team was purposefully constructed to enrich the inquiry and interpretive strength of the study, and consists of an indigenous insider (resident SA), an indigenous outsider (non-resident SA), and an outsider (non-SA) (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001). The research team is further complimented by a methodological consultant and world authority on naturalistic inquiry. Both SA researchers were involved, in one way or another, with some of the participating business leaders during the situated time period of the study. Both universities, together with the SA office of an international consulting company, have partnered to provide the funding needed to initiate, conduct and disseminate the study and its findings.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face environment and recorded via a digital recorder. The interviews were generally unstructured although they all began with the same introductory question. Supporting questions on the interview guide were used when necessary. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), interviews in naturalistic inquiry are usually unstructured although more structured interviews can be completed later, particularly for the purposes of triangulation and/or member checking. This study was also constructed to ensure construct, internal and external validity and reliability, as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Dooley (2002).

Data Analysis

For purposes of presenting the emerging outcomes of the study we selected interviews with five participants substantively involved in the formative years of the organization on which the study is focused. The length of each interview varied between one and a quarter and two and a half hours. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. In part this consent agreed that the identity of each participant in the reporting of the findings would not be revealed in any way, hence no further description of the participants will be presented.

The researchers chose to design a coding system in lieu of using a computer program for this purpose. The coding process has yielded 16 compelling thematic insights which are presented and expounded in the findings section. Each of the three research team members read each interview and coded the insights observed. Each insight was given a number for tracking purposes and the page number of the transcript was noted where the insight occurred. Moreover, each researcher entered comments on the insight and why this particular one emerged for them. Member checking was conducted for triangulation purposes.

The Situated Context of the Study

Significant environmental conditions and forces that accumulated over a number of decades punctuate the context in which this study is situated. Particular contextual circumstances during the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s became increasingly compelling to the involvement of South African (SA) business leadership in the move towards post-apartheid. A brief expounding of the story of this situated context is provided. Although a complex and multi-dimensional situated context, this description can be divided domestically, regionally and internationally.

At a local level, the story of change really gained some intensity in 1976 with the Soweto riots. Although 1976 was seen to be quite catalytic, by 1980 the government of the day had seemingly restored a semblance of normality in the country. The economy was doing well and business confidence had mostly been restored. In accounts of the time, business seemed to be significantly supportive of the achievement of a climate for business activity through the rigid maintenance of law and order (Gottshalk, 1994). In part this was demonstrated through business support of the military and security systems of the day and through regular engagement with the military at senior level at a level of policy as well as implementation. It would be hard to conclude that organized business was deeply involved in the process of change until after 1985.

In tandem with a tightening of security operations, government pursued a program of accelerated (but limited) reform and change during the early 1980's--for example, the advent of the tricameral parliament that was flawed in that it did not include black South Africans in direct parliamentary representation. Ensuing elections were held in 1984 but voter turnout was very poor and the time leading up to the election was typified by violence and repression. The United Democratic Front (UDF) emerged in 1983, essentially playing the role of denying legitimacy to the process of limited reform and providing a voice of internal protest (Gottshalk, 1994). Factions undoubtedly existed within the government and the African National Congress (ANC) at this time. The act of balancing between the more radical and the more conservative in each camp certainly appears to have challenged the leadership of each and made the journey towards an accommodation quite dangerous and much more delicate than would typically be believed--hence the type of compromise that the government attempted through the tricameral parliament (Bell & Ntsebeza, 2001).

At a regional level, government strategy involved concluding local security agreements, primarily with Mozambique and Angola. These agreements came into play in 1984 and essentially caused the countries involved to agree not to house the ANC, in exchange for undertakings not to provide support to rebel movements and/or conduct military raids into these countries. This provided a *cordon sanitaire* that provided some comfort to the citizens on both sides and created a sense of security, albeit tenuous, for the conduct of business.

At an international level, the existence of communism was a significant factor. SA in the 1980's was seen to be regionally significant in the fight to defeat communism and therefore enjoyed support from the U.S. in particular. The ANC was seen to be strongly aligned with communism and its purpose, due to a large part of its leadership being seen as overtly communist. This perception created in business, who had by the mid-1980's perceived that the ANC could become the government in SA, a mission to dissuade the ANC from such an economic course. The collapse of Soviet Russia played significant part in diluting the perceived threat of communism that was thought to lie in the ANC. Through contact, business was also able to gain confidence and feel less threatened by the economic risk that was thought to be inherent in the emergent ANC.

Although little mentioned in current literature, there is the sense that there was a significant shift in the role of business from a condition of passive acceptance, and even active support of the instruments of state, towards a role of engagement and dialogue. This apparent anonymity underlines the nature of the quiet leadership that appears to have been one of the strengths of business at that time. In summary, the 1980's were undoubtedly politically and

economically hazardous for SA. The imperative to create an environment in which an economy could function was significant. The further imperative to avoid revolutionary destruction became an increasingly shared vision, enabled (even if not overtly acknowledged) by the engagement of business interests with the ANC in exile.

The Findings

The 16 thematic insights that have emerged from the data analysis are named and described in Table 1. Unfortunately limitations do not permit discussion of all of these insights. As a result, and following the Table, six insights reflective of the value-driven and principle-centered nature of the business leadership experience under study are presented in more detail and supported by excerpts from the participant interviews.

Table 1. *Emerging Insights on Business Leadership*

Thematic Insights and Descriptions derived from Interviews
1. Acting as Non-partisan Conduits of Political and National Change
• Demonstrating non-partisanship and consistently acting in a non-partisan manner; Serving and acting as *shuttle diplomats*, shuttling among various partisan groups for the purpose of relationship building, consensus seeking, negotiated agreement, and movement towards shared commitment, action and outcome
2. Strictly Adhering to Explicitly Agreed Rules of Conduct
• Consistently acting off strict rules of dialogue and engagement – held and adhered to by all participating business leaders in this movement; Having significant consequences to ongoing participation if rules not adhered to
3. Enrolling a Community of Shared Vision and Values
• Developing a shared vision of, and commitment to, a democratic, free South Africa in which their grandchildren, and their grandchildren's grandchildren, could live, thrive and prosper…socially, politically, culturally, and economically; Pursuing a humane and socially, politically, and economically just South Africa for all
4. Listening Deeply, in Order to Understand and Empathize
• Being willing to unzip one's skin and listen for deep understanding; Often having to recognize one's own lack of familiarity and comfort with diverse cultural backgrounds, and listening through these blind spots and moments of discomfort
5. Acting from Deeply Held Personal Leadership Values
• Believing that everyone is due respect and dignity, regardless of who they are and what they do; Acting with great humility, not seeking the rewards or recognition for their actions
6. Creating Space to Think and Act Fundamentally Differently
• Holding conversations in the cracks, in the in-between spaces not on the immediate radar screen of oppressive or opposing forces; Pioneering new interactions, new ways of thinking and doing
7. Earning Trust and the Authority to Act
• Meeting with and being among the people – recognizing that conversations had to include all, and having the patience and persistence to keep meeting and keep talking until change began to happen; Earning the right to stand up and act on behalf of – earning and extending unquestionable trust, and the authority to act, from all parties and players involved
8. Building Bridges through Strategic Conversations
• Holding consensus seeking, strategic conversations – and persisting with these conversations through diverse and opposed ideologies, until consensus could be sought and reached; Understanding the importance of ongoing communication to all parties, across all perspectives
9. Being Driven by Business Principles and Values
• Inventing and pursuing the vision and goal of "socially responsible free enterprise" – bringing the importance of "business with a social and national conscience" to the awareness of business colleagues, governing boards, and business partnerships, and driving business culture changing initiatives to this same end within their respective companies; Understanding that business leadership has a responsibility beyond that of business performance, to the greater good of the environment, too
10. Leveraging the Power of Quiet Leadership
• Through an agreed code of no personal or collective acclaim, being able to step forward, backward or aside, as needed, to successfully attend to the needs and purpose of the moment; Never seeking recognition or acknowledgement
11. Taking Immense Risks and Making Personal Sacrifices
• Taking substantial personal risk and making unusual personal commitments of time, effort, energy, and expertise – often at the sacrifice of family, other personal, and internal company, obligations and responsibilities; Having the courage to take stands inside their businesses, too, stands that were risky to their careers and businesses at the time
12. Leading Change, from the Top
• Stepping up, at the top – recognizing the importance of top executive active engagement and leadership involvement in the necessary change processes, and in so doing demonstrating a clear commitment to their businesses to socially conscious change and action; Having the courage to crash system boundaries and to so act across and outside of these boundaries
13. Engaging in Critique followed by Committed Action
• Engaging in action committed critique – being prepared to act, often on behalf of, for better, shared and agreed outcomes; Understanding that critique needs to be followed by committed action

(Table continues)

Table 1 continued. *Emerging Insights on Business Leadership*

Thematic Insights and Description derived from Interviews
14. Acting from a Position of Power
• Recognizing that they were acting from a substantial economic power-base, which created space and authority to act and take actions unusual for business in any national context (particularly in the political and social arenas of change); Understanding that 'together, they could do more' – that if they banded together they could leverage their collective, critical mass towards a common good
15. Recognizing, Attending to and Leveraging Driving Forces in the Environment
• Knowing that the environment provided a unique kind of leverage to lead in different ways; Remaining strategically focused, aware and engaged in the larger national and international environments
16. Recognizing and Acting Upon Tipping Point Moments
• Recognizing and acting on the "tipping point" moments – regardless of effort, time, energy, and commitment required and risk involved; Responding as, when, and where required during numerous nationally defining moments

Serving as Non-partisan Conduits of Political and National Change (Table 1, #1)

Although it can be argued that this group of South African (SA) business leaders took a very political stand (Greenleaf, 1995)--one against the prevailing apartheid system and form of government--they clearly understood that to be effective as change agents they had to act in as neutral a manner as possible to achieve their conciliatory aims. This neutrality became important in enabling the change agent and accompanying marginality role (Cummings & Worley, 2001) later played by this organization. Emphasized by all the participants, one described this stance and role particularly aptly: "We never sought to be a principal. We always sought to be a facilitator. We didn't express a point of view, we conveyed points of view. This was our point of view" (IP3, 05/15/03, p. 6). This participant continued "…there was a neutrality, because we knew that, unless there was trust, we would never be communicating what was really going on".

Echoing a deep sense of awareness for business to become involved in the political and national change, another participant shared: "I had the realization…that is was absolutely essential, if there was going to be any future for the country, and for my organization and shareholders…to take a much more proactive line in terms of speaking up on issues on apartheid…trying to steer people away from the disastrous principles embodied in apartheid" (IP1, 07/16/03, pp. 3-4). Using the notion of *shuttle diplomacy* to describe their role, one participant explained: "It was imperative that something was done in rescuing the country from the headlong rush into what could well have become a violent revolution. …We sought to create an environment of shuttle diplomacy…to become people who could move from the far right to the far left and be trusted by both…to establish trust and credibility so that communication could occur" (IP3, 05/15/03, p. 3).

Strictly Adhering to Explicitly Agreed Rules of Conduct (Table 1, #2)

Understandably the achievements of this group of business leaders was in part dependent on adhering to some strictly agreed rules-of-conduct. These rules became essential to the success of their role and mission and to their very survival given the extremely dangerous national conditions under which they were operating, particularly in the formative years.

Describing related advice received during an early meeting with exiled members of the ANC in Zimbabwe, one participant shared: "And they said to us, 'If you're going to do this, then your heads must not show above the parapet…because if that happens you'll be taken out. So, everything you do has got to be done so quietly that there are no documents, there's no formal structure, it's an informal gathering, working quietly'" (IP3, 05/15/03, p.2). Emphasizing the significance of these rules to their role of shuttle diplomacy, and later shuttle brokering, this participant explained: "[The required nature of our role] led to the creation of a constitution and rules for moving forward…we keep a low profile, [and seek] no publicity. Had we sought that, I don't think it could have worked" (IP3, 05/15/03, p.6). He continued: "…no one sought publicity, no one sought any form of reward or grandeur. All were sharply conscious of the need to be a facilitator [of change], rather than a principal" (IP3, 05/15/03, p. 16).

Enrolling a Community of Shared Vision and Values (Table1, #3)

Forging a community built on shared values and vision for an apartheid-free SA was clearly an essential part of this business leadership experience, as explained by the participants. The notion of community, of people and purpose, is described in SA literature by the concept of *Ubuntu*: I am because you are, and you are because we are. It is about developing the spirit of a village, of realizing a communal spirit and shared dreams (Mbigi & Maree, 1995).

This group of business leaders clearly coalesced around strongly shared beliefs about the prevailing environment in SA and their greater social responsibility as a result. "We all saw a recipe for disaster if something were not done…South Africa was on the road to isolation. It was on a road to violence. And it was on a road to where its citizens were becoming the polecats of the world. Something had to be done" (IP3, 05/15/03, pp.3-4). This participant continued: "It was a terrible time of torture, of the infringement of human rights, of dignity, of

humiliation, and of internal violence by the government. Something needed to happen. And we tried to see…Is there a little way in which we can help?" (pp. 4-5).

This need to pursue a new outcome for the country, one that could be envisioned by all, was supported by another participant: "…we needed to see if there were ways in which we could influence the thinking of the [political] leaders…towards a change in approach that would be sensible for the country as a whole" (IP6, 07/03/03, p.10). "There was a shared understanding of 'we need to change'…we need to contribute to changing the system", said another participant, "There was a shared common purpose, without technical detail…and then a growing development of relationships of interdependencies, which then fuelled the common purpose again" (IP5, 06/26/03, pp.7-8). This movement, he explained, was made up by a group of individuals who were "…willing to submerge their individual identities into a larger integrated identity, which had a common purpose, and which became [this organization]" (p.12).

Acting from Deeply Held Personal Leadership Values (Table 1, #5)

Compelling personal values are an integral part of good leadership (Gardner, 1990). Knowing what these are, and acting on them consistently, is imperative for responsible leadership (Lynham, 2004). This sense of, and service to, greater humanity (Greenleaf, 1991) is embodied in the personal leadership values described by the participants.

Reflecting on these compelling personal values, one participant said: "You first have to develop adequate revulsion in what you want to change…revulsion [for] the system. And then, when the opportunity came (sic)…to have the courage to do something about it…and the humility and dignity to listen" (IP5, 06/26/03, p.18). Another elaborated: "I concluded at a very early stage [in my career] that people really are the most important thing…[that to] be any good as a leader…it was terribly important to establish this sort of mutual, reciprocal confidence with people…to be accountable…to trust…to try to always get the best out of people…You can't earn loyalty and trust and support from people simply by asking them to support [you]" (IP1, 07/16/03, pp. 1-2). Another offered: "I think we recognized that we had a set of principles and values that we wanted to uphold and maintain…respect for the individuals…productivity, communication…value for value…there was a need to try to redistribute wealth, but in a responsible manner…" (P6, 07/03/03, p. 10). "Leadership", he said, "[is about] going out of one's way to show respect for the individual, and to ask that individual: What do you think?" (p. 25).

On this responsibility of leadership, one participant said: "People are influenced by the lead they get…I think we must be vigilant all the time…the need for change…is an ongoing process…we can never assume [things] are OK…we can move on but we've also got to be vigilant in the process" (IP1, 07/16/03, pp.9, 14). Another stressed the values of humility and the willingness to suspend judgment, to operate from a point of ignorance: "[The] business leaders were willing to say 'We actually haven't got a clue how to get where we want to get to'…but they had a deep dissatisfaction with the status quo...[and they] had to be willing to go in open-handed" (IP5, 06/26/03, pp. 3-4). Vividly capturing the genre of the humility of this group of business leaders, one participant shared: "If you don't mind who gets the credit there's nothing you can't do" (IP3, 05/15/03, p. 7).

Earning Trust and the Authority to Act (Table 1, #7)

The story of this business leadership experience compellingly exemplifies what Cohen and Bradford (1990) describe as *influence without authority*. We have come to think about this insight as reflecting the need to *earn moral authority to influence and act*, as illuminated by the insights following.

Recalling what was different about this leadership experience from others they had had during their leadership careers, one participant said: "I very quickly found out that the sort of behaviours that I used in my business to get people to start moving and take action and think differently didn't work". He explained, "In a hierarchical structure your authority is first conveyed to you, and thereafter how well you continue depends on respect and trust…which you build with your people. Outside you don't have that advantage of the award of the initial authority. You have to build it from scratch, and it is unique" (IP2, 05/14/03, p. 28).

Clearly earning trust was an integral part of this business leadership experience, repeatedly emphasized in the interviews. "It was a leadership that depended totally on mutual trust. And it was all about being trusted and accepted by the parties that were actually doing the job of changing the face of South Africa. It was a leadership that said: How can we best win the confidence and trust of the far right, the far left, the extremists, the middle players, and those who headed up the political movements concerned?…They had to know that whatever they told us, we would never breach [their] confidence, that we would convey it in a manner which would never be to their detriment, or disadvantage. The most important thing to achieve [was] to gain absolute trust across a unique spectrum…it had to be earned. There was a lot at stake" (IP3, 05/15/03, p. 10). Said another of the effect of earning this trust: "It [the organization] had credibility…it was well regarded…on all sides…it became very much a sort of a clearing house…and very clear to all of us…that we were suddenly part of the process of change, and one knew that you could [now] influence things" (IP1, 07/16/03, p.5).

Being Driven by Business Principles and Values (Table 1, #9)

Without exception, the participants stressed the need to recognize that they were not operating from some altruistic intent. Yes, their goals extended to the well-being of the nation, and yes, this goal was ultimately one that enabled a bridge across a diversity of ideologies. However, they made it very clear that their primary motivation was "an abiding belief in free enterprise" (IP2, 05/14/03, p. 23). This need to improve the business environment for the sake of better business performance and to attend to the primary stakeholder needs is echoed throughout leadership performance literature as a necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, outcome of responsible business leadership (Gardner, 1990; Greenleaf, 1991; Lynham, 2004). What is *not* unusual about this insight is that business leadership acted in *self-interest*. What *is* unusual is the way in which they did this--that in the end, it was in service to a common national good (Bryson & Cosby, 1992; Greenleaf, 1991, 1995).

Extracts from one interview are especially revealing in this regard. "We were prepared to go in conflict with this government over what we considered to be a very important issue called *freedom of association*. So we asked ourselves the question: What do we stand for?...And we came up with this way of describing it: *Socially responsible free enterprise*…free enterprise, but with a [social and national] conscience…A better environment for our businesses to flourish in. Not the environment that we would necessarily design, but a better environment, and that's what motivated us. An abiding belief in free enterprise…*really* [believing] in free enterprise, as being the right environmental mechanism in which the best [for all] will emerge" (IP2, 05/14/03, pp. 7, 23).

These concerted efforts were not just externally focused, but first became integral to the business culture of the companies being led by these business leaders. In one company this change took the form of creating *An Island of Sanity and Security*: "We were seeking to do in the country what we were doing in the company" explained one participant. "There was so much tension in people's lives outside the company that the leadership of the company said: Can we not create within our company an island of sanity, of safety, and of peace and trust? Other business leaders who were involved [in the movement] did similar things in their companies…to differing extents, in differing companies" (IP3, 05/15/03, pp. 12 & 13). Gradually, company by company, a new order of business in SA began to be fostered.

Implications for Research and Practice

Although not intended to be generalized, given the increasing phenomenon of galloping globalism and concomitant democratic capitalism (Terreblanche, 2003), the emerging insights have particular relevance and transportability to organizations operating in foreign national contexts--particularly those undergoing fundamental political, economic, and social change. Business leadership in these contexts has a responsibility to more than just the bottom line--it must also attend and add value to national stability, sustainable economic performance, and long term social growth and human development. The findings from this study provide a sense of the kind of business leadership likely to be increasingly needed in the future. Particularly relevant in the global context in which we live, we need to understand and learn from experiences of business leadership in diverse, complex and emerging national environments, the likes of South Africa. In order to do so we need to continue to uncloak leadership histories from these transitioning countries, encourage participants to share their experiences, and use this knowledge and understanding to inform broader leadership and leadership development theory, research and practice.

This is one such story from which we can learn; there are undoubtedly many others. However, because many of these stories of experience are currently in the form of personal oral histories they are in danger of being lost--their keepers will not be indefinitely available. We cannot afford to loose such sage insights and lessons from experience. Through more purposeful inquiry and study we can guard against such loss.

Contributions to New Knowledge in HRD

It has been said that, among other things, HRD is the process of developing and unleashing human expertise for the purpose of improving organizational performance (Swanson, 1995). Is there, however, a responsibility beyond the walls of the organization? Some would argue, with globalization the answer is a definite *Yes* (McLean & McLean, 2003; McLean, Osman-Gani & Cho, 2004). While a majority of our HRD literature examines the effects of globalization from perspectives of developed countries, much less is known or documented about HRD problems and challenges faced by developing countries. This research informs the development of business leadership able to think and act in fundamentally different ways and will demand a rethink of business leadership development processes the world over. Strategic HRD will increasingly need to include the development of strategic and globally responsible business leadership. This emphasis, as illustrated by the findings of this study, not only places HRD firmly in a strategic role within organizations of the future, but also in one of global strategic relevance.

Furthermore, HRD inquiry has been remarkably impoverished in terms of applying phenomenological methods to develop deeper understanding of its phenomena of concern (Dooley & Lynham, 2003). This phenomenological study illustrates the value of pursuing such research and using its outcomes to inform further research, theory development and practice.

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