

# Maturity of the Organisational Leadership Development Process – Development and Validation of an Afrocentric Measure

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## Abstract

Organisations spend enormous amounts of money on leadership development. Yet, these organisations do not necessarily know exactly in which leadership development programmes or areas they should invest for each level of work (leadership). The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process that is fit for use in southern Africa across the different levels of leadership. This measure consists of two instruments, namely the qualitative Social Perspective Profiling and the quantitative Leadership Development Process Maturity Index. Both these instruments were validated against two large multinational southern African organisations and revealed different levels of maturity of the leadership development process across the levels of leadership in these organisations. As a result, southern African organisations are now able to measure themselves against the benchmark areas that represent the maturity of the leadership development process. This will allow these organisations to close the gap between their leadership development process status quo for each level of leadership and what is most or least critical from a leadership development point of view, which will result in an improved return on learning and the increased success of these organisations.

**Keywords:** Eurocentric, Afrocentric, maturity, index, social perspective, leadership development process

## Introduction

Companies' long-term sustainability depends on the choice and cultivation of their future leaders (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). The ultimate goal of leadership development



research should be to identify which components of the leadership development process have the most significant outcomes and impact (Hopkins & Meyer, 2019). It is therefore imperative that any organisation strive towards maturity in its leadership development process by allocating scarce resources to the most critical areas in the leadership development process and steering away from wasting resources on the least critical areas in this process.

The key focus of this study was to develop a measure that African, and specifically southern African, organisations can use to assess to what extent their leadership development process is mature, for the levels of leadership, namely supervisory level or junior management, middle management, and senior management. This was achieved by combining maturity areas in the Eurocentric and Afrocentric leadership development process that are relevant to this geographical context. According to Iwowo (2015), a system that combines indigenous knowledge of African leadership development with mainstream theories of Eurocentric leadership development is the most viable option for leadership development in Africa.

Organisations could use such a measure of maturity of the leadership development process to create focus in their leadership development efforts, as opposed to using a “shotgun approach” to this vitally important aspect of organisational growth. Focused and effective intervention would then help these organisations to increase the return on their investment in leadership development (Avolio et al. 2010). This greater focus and effectiveness could ultimately ensure that the leadership pipeline is set to deliver the right leaders at the right time (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).

## Literature Review

The main purpose of the literature review was to establish the conceptual foundation for the study and to explore the measures that other authors have used in relation to the focus areas of the research, as recommended by Hancock and Algozzine (2017).

### **Afrocentricity**

Molefi Kete Asante is considered the leader and mastermind of the Afrocentric movement (Khokholkova, 2016). Asante (1980), author of the seminal work *Afrocentricity: The theory of social change*, published a revised version in 2003. In this revision, Asante gives an in-depth and detailed account of all aspects of Afrocentricity. He also provides an expansive definition of this concept, of which the first part is most relevant in the context of the present research study: “Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate” (p. 2). He continues by declaring that Afrocentricity points the way to the restructuring of one’s identity, and that it depoliticises the concept of race (Asante, 2003). Chawane’s (2016) view is that Afrocentricity represents a call for recognition of the African viewpoint.

Eurocentrism holds a Western worldview (Akpan & Odohoedi, 2016), which advocates the use of European standards and models (Hoskins, 1992), whereas Afrocentrism deals with a specific cultural history that originated in Africa and consists of norms against which African people judge or measure themselves. There is an increasing interest in research and developing theory focused on leadership across cultural contexts (Avolio et al. 2009), as most leadership studies have been conducted in a Eurocentric context. Leadership styles and behaviours in Africa may differ from those of the rest of the world, without necessarily being ineffective (Kuada, 2010). Walumbwa et al. (2011) note that, in most African organisations, the building of a robust leadership development system is utterly neglected. There is a need for guidance from researchers on what kind of leadership development strategies should be adopted in Africa. Little previous research has been conducted in Africa, and even southern Africa on this topic (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Geber & Keane, 2013; Kuada, 2010; Mbigi, 2005).

Owusu-Frempong (2005) asserts that European ideas and concepts have influenced the social sciences of Africa and the thinking of African people. He calls for a joint employment of both African and European views in harmonious growth and development of a society. This view is shared by Chawane (2016) when he calls for the co-existence of Eurocentricity and Afrocentricity.

### **Maturity Indexes**

A key focus of the literature review was the construct maturity, with specific reference to the organisational leadership development process, and measurement instruments to determine the level of maturity. “The maturity of any system or process addresses the extent to which it has evolved in response to environmental contingencies and is able to more effectively address the key objectives for which it was originally designed” (Crowley et al. 2016, p. 28).

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines an index as “a number (such as a ratio) derived from a series of observations and used as an indicator or measure” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Various maturity indexes are successfully used to measure maturity in specific organisational areas to support continuous improvement, including the Leadership Maturity Index (Ali et al., 2014), the Public Health Information Technology Maturity Index (Crowley et al., 2016) and the Mobility as a Service Maturity Index (Goulding & Kamargianni, 2018).

The Communication Maturity Index was developed by Johansson et al. (2019), who stated: “We believe communication maturity to be a dynamic concept; that is, the level of maturity is subject to change, which makes the index valuable both for research, practice, and organisational development in communication” (p. 11). The first step in the development of their index was to perform a literature review to identify theoretical areas that indicate communication maturity, for inclusion in the index. They further relied on interview data and document analysis, and conducted case studies in 11

organisations to validate the index. This overall approach is aligned with the research design of the present study.

### **Maturity of the Leadership Development Process**

Much has been written about the maturity of individual leaders' development (Armitage et al., 2006; Attafar et al., 2014; Cook-Greuter, 2014; Du Toit et al., 2011; Hogan, 2008; Miskelly & Duncan, 2014). However, little research is available on the process followed to reach organisational leadership development maturity (Loew & Garr, 2011). Available research in this regard is limited to specific leadership development areas in organisations.

To have reached the stage of maturity or to be mature implies “having attained a final or desired state” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). For organisations to be mature as far as their leadership development process is concerned, they have to reach and maintain the most advanced stage in this process. This can only be determined using a relevant measure of organisational maturity (or standard) of the leadership development process that includes all aspects of the leadership development process in organisations, against which the organisation can then be measured.

The maturity areas of the leadership development process formed the basis for the development of a measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process in this research study. These areas are specific or separately identifiable aspects in the leadership development process that indicate the maturity of leadership development in an organisation. The identification and validation of these areas in the leadership development process are therefore vital to measuring an organisation's progress towards leadership development process maturity.

### **Levels of Work**

Numerous authors, including Avolio (2005), and Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010), insist that the leadership development process be tailored to the unique requirements of each level of work. With regard to the essential components of leadership development programmes, Holt et al. (2018) propose that the delivery and content of the themes that emerge be tailored to each organisational level, but this step was omitted in their research, which they regard as a limitation of their study. Kaiser (2005) also makes a case for taking organisational levels into account in the development of leaders, and distinguishes between supervisory level, middle management, and executive level.

Mumford et al. (2007) simply refer to these levels of work as junior, mid-level, and senior managers. Griffith et al. (2019) categorise critical leadership skills according to three organisational levels – supervisory leaders, middle managers, and executive leaders.

For the purposes of the present study, the following three levels of work were defined:

- Level 1: Supervisory level or junior management – does not have the ability to appoint or dismiss employees;
- Level 2: Middle management – may appoint or dismiss employees, but is not involved in strategic decision-making in the organisation; and
- Level 3: Senior management – is involved in strategic decision-making in the organisation; this level includes general managers, executives, directors, and chief executive officers.

It is important to note that Level 1 is described as including both supervisory level and junior management, because, as was demonstrated earlier in this section, different authors use these terms interchangeably for the first-line management level. This was also explained to all the research participants in the present study.

## Basis for the Study

The information that formed the basis for conducting the research that is covered in this study, was sourced from another study by the same authors (researchers), as explained below.

In this original study an extensive literature review was conducted by using a structured content analysis to be able to identify contributions regarding critical success factors for the successful implementation of a leadership development process in an organisation, or referred to in this study as the “maturity areas of the leadership development process”. From the literature review of 63 peer-reviewed academic articles and 11 textbooks on the topic of leadership development, it was clear that the current knowledge was limited mainly to Eurocentric leadership development, with little consideration of Afrocentric approaches. Walumbwa et al. (2011) call for this to change, as it is imperative to conduct research and create understanding of leadership development appropriate for Africa.

Expert knowledge is extremely valuable in contributing to research, especially if empirical information on the topic is scarce or not readily available (Orsi et al., 2011). Guest et al. (2013) highlight the importance of including the most knowledgeable individuals and documenting numerous viewpoints, in order to enhance the trustworthiness of a research study. As recommended by Orsi et al. (2011), subsequent to the literature review, individuals were selected who were considered active in the field of leadership development. Purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling (Gray, 2018; Guest et al., 2013), was applied to identify nine leadership development expert panel members, who met or exceeded specific criteria.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed for probing of the leadership development experts to provide more detail on their responses (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Gray, 2018). Open-ended questions, which were based on themes that were extracted from the original literature review, were used to maximise the inductive and conversational

aspects of the interviews (Guest et al., 2013). The interviews were recorded by way of a digital voice recorder, and a smartphone application as backup recorder (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Mouton, 2013). Once the data had been collected, it was saved electronically.

The data were subsequently coded and subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Guest et al., 2013). This resulted in the identification of 70 new maturity areas of the Afrocentric leadership development process, in addition to the 55 existing Eurocentric areas that were extracted from the secondary research. The consolidated, comprehensive list of 125 maturity areas of the leadership development process formed the basis for the study in this research study.

## Research Objectives

The following research objectives (ROs) were set and included for the research that is covered in the scope of this study:

- RO1: To develop a comprehensive measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process, fit for use in the southern African context, for each of the levels of leadership.
- RO2: To validate the developed measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process by means of case studies involving two organisations.

## Research Design

### Research Objective 1

In order to achieve the first research objective of the study, the two different phases discussed below needed to be executed.

#### *Phase 1 – Q methodology*

In Phase 1 the rich data gathered from the expert panel members were further analysed and interrogated. These were the same participants that were originally chosen to extract the base information for this study. They were a sample of leadership development practitioners that met specific criteria for inclusion, out of the population of all the leadership development practitioners in SADC (Southern African Development Community) member countries. Q methodology was used as a technique to further tap into their knowledge and experience, and to analyse issues on which they agreed and disagreed with regard to critical areas in the leadership development process. One of these original participants could not contribute to this part of the research though for personal reasons, unrelated to the research study.

Q methodology is a research method used in psychology and social sciences to study people's viewpoints or subjectivity with regard to a specific topic (Sklarwitz, 2017; Walker et al., 2018). It is a suitable method when a range of diverse and subjective experiences and perspectives need to be researched (Shinebourne, 2009). Q methodology makes use of quantitative aspects, but it is essentially a qualitative research method that relies on interpretative techniques (Wijngaarden, 2016).

Webler et al. (2009) provide a concise overview of the practical Q-methodology steps, which were also followed in this research study, and confirm that it is an ideal method to reveal the social perspectives (patterns of beliefs or viewpoints shared by people) on a topic.

A Q study begins with the identification of a concourse (the sum of everything said about a topic or the 125 maturity areas of the leadership development process that formed the basis of the study). From the concourse, a sample of Q statements or the Q set of 47 statements was strategically selected, based on frequency and representation. Following is a list of the 47 statements that were included in the Q set for this study:

- There must be alignment between the leadership development process and the strategy of the organisation.
- The leadership development process must be evaluated and improved continuously to ensure business or organisational relevance.
- A leadership development culture must be present throughout the organisation.
- Each leader must have an individual development plan that needs to be revised over time.
- The use of relevant technology must be incorporated into the leadership development process.
- Regular feedback based on formal assessments must be provided to developing leaders.
- Coaching as a developmental tool is essential to successful leadership development.
- Senior management must provide long-term support to the leadership development process as a strategic priority in the organisation.
- All stakeholders in the leadership development process must commit resources, including time, to the leadership development process.
- Assessments are required to confirm the developing leader's baseline competencies, skills and behaviours.

- Senior leaders must understand that leadership development is a continuous process, and not a once-off event.
- The culture and values of the organisation and that of its existing and future leaders must be considered in the development and execution of the leadership development process.
- Each organisation must have a leadership development model or framework that is unique to its leadership needs and challenges.
- Leaders must be encouraged to take time to reflect on their leadership and leadership development journey.
- Mentoring is required as support for developing leaders.
- Senior leaders must be actively engaging facilitators at some point in the leadership development process.
- Internal and external organisational resources must be assigned to the leadership development process.
- Commitment to long-term self-development is an essential component of a successful leadership development process.
- Ongoing leader role alignment is required where the specific capability, skill and competency to deliver on the work that is needed, are aligned with the changing environment of the organisation.
- To ensure the continuity of the leadership development process, the leadership team that drives the leadership development process must consist of good leaders with a long tenure in the organisation.
- The leadership development process must fit the company's unique culture and should be integrated into this culture.
- The developing leader must co-create his or her individual leadership development plan.
- Team-based leadership development must be included in the design of the leadership development process.
- 360-degree feedback is critical to the successful development of a leader.
- Informal assessments and feedback are critical to the successful development of a leader.
- Senior leaders must create an environment in which developing leaders can share what they have learnt and where these learnings are considered for implementation in the organisation.
- Sufficient funds must be allocated to the implementation of the leadership development process.



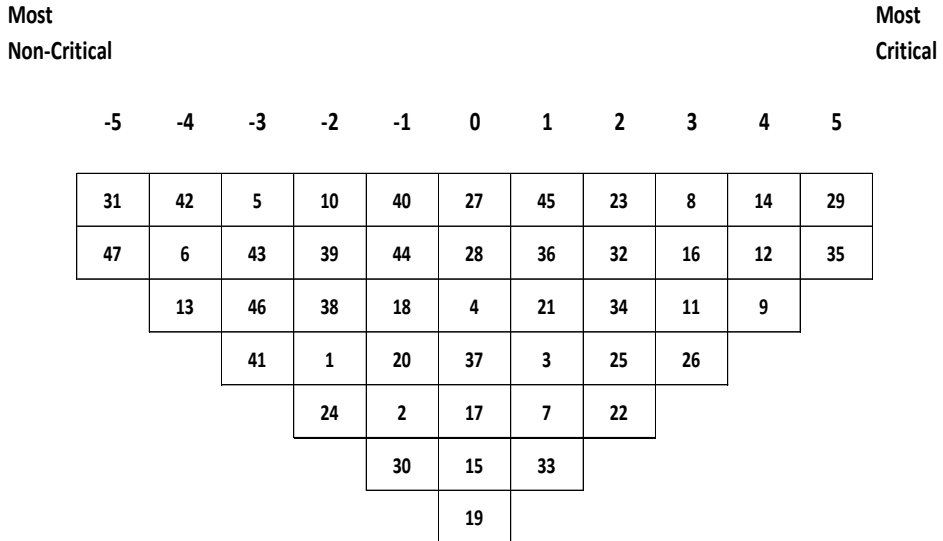
- The leadership development process must focus on identifying and closing the gaps between the developing leader's current and required competencies for organisational success.
- Developing leaders must understand their meaning, purpose and role in the world and at work.
- Diversity management must be an underlying theme throughout the leadership development process.
- It is critical for an organisation to have a return-on-investment measurement in place for the leadership development process.
- The ability to cope with a world that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) must be incorporated into the leadership development process.
- For the leadership development process to be successful, senior management must change their mindset that leadership development is not an expense, but an investment.
- The leadership development process must focus on developing a combination of hard and soft skills in each leader.
- The leadership development process must focus on creating leaders who are in service of both driving the organisation's goals, as well as creating a safe, productive place in which people are inspired and enjoy coming to work.
- Formal (or planned or structured) and informal (or unplanned or unstructured) leadership development experiences are required as part of the leadership development process.
- Constructive feedback is critical to a successful leadership development process.
- Leadership development methods must be measurable.
- Leaders that oversee the leadership development process must be well respected in the organisation.
- What is required to become a leader in the organisation and what this process entails need to be communicated during the induction of each new potential leader.
- The principle of connectivity between people and the ubuntu philosophy must be incorporated into the leadership development process.
- Job rotation must be incorporated into the leadership development process.
- A sponsor-driven approach must be adopted in the leadership development process where a developing leader can continuously check in and share his or her reflections with an assigned sponsor.

- For the leadership development process to be successful, a culture of authentic people care must exist in the organisation.
- Ethics must be an underlying theme throughout the leadership development process.
- Before the leadership development process is launched, it is important that each facilitator has an in-depth understanding of the developing leaders and their unique context, which should deal with any discomfort that might exist in this developmental relationship.
- The leadership development process must be outcome-based.

These 47 statements in the Q set represent, out of the original dataset of 125 statements, the most important and representative areas to a successful leadership development process in an organisation across all levels of leadership, according to the sample of southern African leadership development experts that were included in this study. Each Q statement is an expression of an individual's opinion. The P set or Q participants, with clearly different opinions, were then asked to express their opinions about the Q statements by sorting them. Q sorts were collected, and these were then analysed using statistical techniques of correlation and factor analysis to reveal patterns in the way they associated opinions. The results of the analysis were interpreted and expressed in the form of different social perspectives. A Q study also reveals how the individuals who did the Q sort agree or disagree with the perspectives.

In addition to each participant completing the Q-sort exercise in a frequency distribution grid (Figure 1, adapted from Watts & Stenner, 2012), the final stage of the data-collection process was a post-Q-sort interview. The purpose of this interview was to investigate participants' broader understanding of the issue under investigation, to explore why they sorted the items in the Q sort as they did, and to determine the meaning they attach to particularly important items (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The qualitative and quantitative aspects of Q methodology are complementary; unique participant views are investigated with the support of quantitative statistical analyses (Crosse, 2019; Walker et al., 2018). Once the Q-sort and post-Q-sort interview data have been gathered, the data were analysed quantitatively (using statistical analyses) and qualitatively (from a social perspective point of view). The combined output was then considered in the interpretation and reaching conclusions.



**Figure 1:** Example of a completed Q sort

*Phase 2 – Development of the measure*

The use of Q methodology had yielded rich information in this study, which was then used to develop a comprehensive measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process. An instrument is “a measuring device for determining the present value of a quantity under observation” or “a means whereby something is achieved, performed, or furthered” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). The Social Perspective Profiling (SPP) and the Leadership Development Process Maturity Index (LDPMI™) instruments were both developed after an in-depth analysis of the data collected through the research. Both these instruments can be used to drive continuous improvement of the leadership development process in organisations.

It is not advised that these instruments be used independently, because they provide feedback to an organisation from different perspectives and complement each other. Both instruments should therefore be used when assessing the maturity of the leadership development process of an organisation in order to receive comprehensive feedback. Table 1 highlights the differences between these instruments.

**Table 1:** Major differences between instruments of the measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process

SPP	#	LDPMI™
Qualitative measurement	1.	Quantitative measurement
Focuses on the closest match to a single social perspective for each level of work	2.	Focuses on achieving the highest possible overall index score for each level of work
Assessment is performed for each individual level of work and not at organisational level	3.	An overall organisational score can be calculated by adding up individual leadership level scores
Measured at factor level, for each level of work, based on specific participant views	4.	Measured at a macro-level of work, based on all participants' views
Extreme and distinguishing statements are included in the measurement	5.	Only extreme statements are included in the measurement (i.e. columns +5, +4, -5, and -4)
Purpose is to see if the leadership development process of the organisation is in line with the benchmark social perspective for each level of work	6.	Purpose is to ensure that organisational resources are focused on the right areas of the leadership development process

## Research Objective 2

### *Phase 3 – Validation of the measure*

“At this stage of development, we are not looking to verify whether the model directly meets the needs of specific users, instead, we test whether this largely generic model meets the initial criteria for building the model in the first place” (Beecham et al. 2005, p. 252). This aptly describes the purpose of validating the measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process that was developed in the present study. The validation was performed through two case studies, conducted in large companies that operate across southern Africa – one from the manufacturing and the other from the financial services sector. Both these organisations had embarked on a formal leadership development journey a number of years ago.

In order to validate the SPP (qualitative) and LDPMI™ (quantitative) instruments of the measure, a single, self-administered consolidated case study questionnaire was developed, which can be used to measure the maturity of the leadership development process of organisations. This questionnaire contains a total of 90 closed-ended questions, requiring only “Yes” or “No” answers: 35 questions for the supervisory or junior management level, 27 for the middle management level, and 28 questions for the senior management level. The questions are translations of the extreme-column

statements of columns +5, +4, -5, and -4, as well as the distinguishing statements from the original Q sorts, into a (positive) question format.

For example, Statement 47 read: “The leadership development process must be outcome-based”, which was translated to the following question: “Is your leadership development process outcome-based?” The same approach was followed throughout the design of the questionnaire, and only a few questions needed to be adjusted slightly to ensure that the question did not increase the risk of respondent bias in answering the question. For example, Statement 44 read: “For the leadership development process to be successful, a culture of authentic people care must exist in the organisation.” The question relating to this statement could therefore not be: “Do you have a culture of authentic people care in your organisation to support a successful leadership development process?” This question was, instead, reformulated as follows: “Do you deem a culture of authentic people care in your organisation as a critical factor to the success of your leadership development process?” The thought process here was that, if the area in this question (statement) was deemed critical to the leadership development process of the organisation, senior management would ensure its prompt implementation or sustain such an existing culture.

Completing the consolidated case study questionnaire only requires that the person who oversees the leadership development process in an organisation be honest and experienced in this field. Therefore, in the present study, a complete case study in which the answer to each question is verified against documentary, interview, or other evidence, was not required to validate the measure. The measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process was designed to help organisations to continuously improve their leadership development process, and the assumption was that the answers to the questions in the questionnaire would be thoroughly considered and be a correct reflection of the reality in that organisation.

## Trustworthiness

Various approaches were followed to ensure quality and rigour in all three phases of the study (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). With regard to credibility, the Q methodology, the use of social perspectives, maturity indexes and questionnaire feedback are all well-established methods in qualitative research. Triangulation was also used from different perspectives, in addition to data accuracy and other quality checks. Throughout the research process, the researchers (authors) critically reflected on the knowledge that was produced and their role in producing that knowledge. Furthermore, strategies were employed to ensure the participants’ honesty when answering the questions. Iterative questioning took place during the Q sort process with each participant and peer scrutiny was employed where the researchers consulted an external Q methodology expert throughout the Q methodology process. Transferability, dependability and confirmability were also ensured, which included steps that were taken to avoid researcher bias, and the use of a data-tracking log.

## Results and Findings

### Phase 1 – Q Methodology

Peter Schmolck (2015), in co-operation with Kent State University, wrote a software program that makes the analysis of a Q study relatively easy, called PQMethod. “PQMethod is a statistical program tailored to the requirements of Q studies” (Schmolck, 2015, p. 2). The individual Q sorts were consolidated for each participant and level of work, in an Excel file. Once the accuracy of the transferred data had been verified, the file was used to populate the data in PQMethod. The data were then subjected to another check to ensure the accuracy of the captured data in PQMethod.

The remainder of Phase 1 focused on an analysis of the content of the PQMethod software reports. The main purpose of generating these reports was to identify the three factors as well as the most critical and most non-critical statements for each level of work, which formed the basis of Phase 2 of the research study.

The most important PQMethod software report tables for the middle management level are hereby discussed to illustrate what this part of the research entailed (see Tables 2, 3 and 4).

With reference to Table 2 for this level of work, the following needs to be highlighted. A defining Q sort is indicated with an X. Factor 1 was defined by participant P2, P3, P5, and P7. Factor 2 was defined by P4 and P6. Factor 3 was defined by P1 and P8.

**Table 2:** Factor matrix with X indicating a defining sort – Middle management

QSORT	Participant	Loadings					
		1		2		3	
1	P1_MM	0.0098		0.0138		0.8344	X
2	P2_MM	0.7661	X	-0.2016		0.0866	
3	P3_MM	0.7127	X	0.3876		-0.0672	
4	P4_MM	0.0888		0.8103	X	-0.0250	
5	P5_MM	0.8448	X	-0.1352		0.0341	
6	P6_MM	0.1315		0.8406	X	0.1761	
7	P7_MM	0.7162	X	0.1685		0.3870	
8	P8_MM	0.1622		0.0630		0.7636	X
% var. expl.		30		20		18	

Descending factor arrays: The focus of the statistical analysis in this section was the extreme statements that were classified by the participants as most critical and most non-critical to the middle management level of work. Brief reference is made here to these statements for Factor 1 of this level of work. Table 3 shows that, for this factor,

Statements 29, 35, 22, 12, and 14 recorded the highest Z-scores, and were therefore regarded as most critical.

**Table 3:** Five highest Z-score statements for Factor 1– Middle management

No.	Statement description	Z-score
29	Developing leaders must understand their meaning, purpose and role in the world and at work	2.297
35	The leadership development process must focus on creating leaders who are in service of both driving the organisation’s goals and creating a safe, productive place in which people are inspired and enjoy coming to work	2.000
22	The developing leader must co-create his or her individual leadership development plan	1.496
12	The culture and values of the organisation and that of its existing and future leaders must be considered in the development and execution of the leadership development process	1.329
14	Leaders must be encouraged to take time to reflect on their leadership and leadership development journey	1.198

For this factor, Statements 13, 31, 42, 5, and 47 recorded the lowest Z-scores (see Table 4) and were therefore regarded as most non-critical.

**Table 4:** Five lowest Z-score statements for Factor 1– Middle management

No.	Statement description	Z-score
13	Each organisation must have a leadership development model or framework that is unique to its leadership needs and challenges	-1.540
31	It is critical for an organisation to have a return-on-investment measurement in place for the leadership development process	-1.586
42	Job rotation must be incorporated into the leadership development process	-1.776
5	The use of relevant technology must be incorporated into the leadership development process	-1.812
47	The leadership development process must be outcome-based	-1.999

**Phase 2 – Development of the measure**

*Social Perspective Profiling (SPP)*

The goal of Q methodology is to integrate quantitative and qualitative techniques to reveal social perspectives (Webler et al., 2009). Brown (1993) posits that measure and

meaning cannot be separated, referring to it as a mixture of statistics and scientific judgement (Brown, 1980). In the present study, the quantitative data are represented by the output reports from the PQMethod analysis (previous section), and the qualitative data were gathered through post-Q-sort interviews and written Q-sort feedback. Schmolck (2015) emphasises the importance of these participant viewpoints or perspectives, as well as the common themes they reveal.

The social perspectives were identified by looking for patterns in the Q sorts of the participants, which represented their viewpoints. At the point where a factor is expressed in the language of the Q statement, it becomes a social perspective, which is the product of the Q study (Webler et al., 2009). Phrased differently, this means that the statistical or quantitative data contained in the PQMethod reports can make suggestions, but the qualitative participant feedback either confirms or contradicts these suggestions, thereby forming the social perspectives. The authors also recommend that, when writing up social perspectives, researchers look for the key elements of each perspective, focusing first on a primary theme, which is represented by the statements with the highest and lowest Z-scores.

In formulating the social perspectives in the present study, bias was reduced by selecting and quoting Q statements verbatim, as recommended by Webler et al. (2009). Included in the social perspectives for each factor were: the 10 Q statements in the +5, +4, -5 and -4 extreme columns of the factor array, the relevant post-Q-sort interview feedback for these statements, and the statements that are unique to that factor or social perspective, which distinguishes it from the other factors. These distinguishing statements had a significantly different Z-score compared to the other factors, and had therefore been treated differently by the participants for that level of work. Statements with high representation in only one factor are a good point to start when documenting the social perspective (Webler et al., 2009). This approach also aligned with the recommendation by Watts and Stenner (2012) to ensure that the interrelationship of the many items in the factor array drive the interpretation of the factor.

#### *Example of social perspective*

Based on the participant feedback (viewpoints) and the three factors that were identified for each of the three levels of work (leadership) from the Q methodology part of the study in Phase 1 of the research, nine social perspectives were formulated in total. The following section reports on the first social perspective for the first level of work (supervisory level or junior management) to illustrate what a social perspective entail. The statement and column numbers for that statement in the factor array are quoted in brackets at the end of each statement. The participant feedback quoted directly is provided as indented text with the participant (P) number at the end of this text; statements without a participant number at the end, represent feedback paraphrased by the researchers:



### Factor 1 (P3, P5, and P7) – Nurture

In this social perspective, the organisation focuses on caring for and protecting supervisors or junior managers while they are growing as leaders. The culture and values of the organisation and those of its existing and future leaders must be considered in the development and execution of the leadership development process (12: +4).

The conditions for creating that, are imperative to get right, before movement in leadership development takes place, and the junior leaders must also “feel” the culture (P7).

Developing leaders must understand their meaning, purpose, and role in the world and at work (29: +5).

Once an individual understands his or her purpose in life, you solve a lot of other issues in the whole leadership development process . . . Selfishness can be squeezed out, sensitivity for criticism disappear, and critical areas of improvement may be addressed (P5).

This is the grounding and the most critical factor in junior leaders, accepting and learning to be good leaders (P3).

Mentoring is required as support for developing leaders (15: +5).

A deliberate mentoring process, which touches all areas of their lives, is the best way to support and develop all the other important and critical areas . . . (P5).

Having a mentor who knows the ropes and can offer advice and specific company-related views and input will greatly speed up the onboarding process of a new leader (P3).

In this view, the ability to cope with a VUCA world must be incorporated into the leadership development process (32: +4).

Any process for a junior [leader] should be to equip him or her to continue to grow and develop in this volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and cruel world we live in. If you do not help leaders on junior level with this, the world will crush their potential (P5).

Informal assessments and feedback are also critical to the successful development of a leader (25: +4), and less important is regular feedback on formal assessments (6: -3).

A high reliance on formal feedback is not working in practice (P5).

Immediate, on-the-job, regular feedback is going to be more useful . . . more informal feedback, more often, than the formal (P3).

Formal (planned and structured) and informal (unplanned and unstructured) leadership development experiences are required as part of the leadership development process (36: +3). It is not important that technology be incorporated into the leadership development process (5: -4), because it can become a distraction (P7).

People with this social perspective believe that the developing leader must co-create his or her individual leadership development plan (22: +2), and that each leader must have an individual development plan that is revised over time (4: +2).

Being able then to fully absorb their own individual part to play and to understand the customised way in which to get there, provides them with a framework for strong tactical and transactional learning, and a motivation to begin with the end in mind (P3).

It is non-critical that an organisation has a leadership development model or framework that is unique to its leadership needs and challenges (13: -4).

The development of a unique model or framework takes so much time and energy, and before it is functional, it will be outdated and not relevant anymore (P5).

In this view, it is not critical for an organisation to have in place a measure of return on investment in the leadership development process (31: -4), or that the leadership development process be outcome-based (47: -5).

The reasons why return on investment and outcome-based leadership development processes are the most non-critical are because they normally clash with the real issues of what is, deep down, the most important to people. These methods take the focus away from that "I as an individual am important to you." These methods destroy trust (P5).

It is also not required that leaders who are in charge of the leadership development process are respected in the organisation (39: -3).

It is likely that the new leaders are motivated to learn and will learn more from the materials than the medium or person who is providing the opportunity (P3).

Finally, it is not critical that, before launching the leadership development process, each facilitator has an in-depth understanding of the developing leaders and their unique context in order to deal with any discomfort that might exist in the developmental relationship (46: -5). At this stage, the facilitators should rather have an in-depth knowledge of the programme material (P3).

#### *Process to use SPP as an instrument*

Each of the three social perspectives for each of the three levels of work represents a legitimate viewpoint of more than one experienced leadership development practitioner or expert operating in southern Africa. Any of the social perspectives for each level of work therefore represents what an organisation should strive to focus on in its leadership

development process, as it represents “what works” in this geographical context. When using the SPP instrument for the maturity of the organisational leadership development process, an organisation should determine to what extent its current leadership development process matches any of the three social perspectives for each of the levels of work. The current leadership development process status of the organisation is reflected in its answers to the consolidated case study questionnaire.

This qualitative method of measuring its leadership development process maturity will enable the organisation to assess to what extent there is conformance between where the organisation is and where it should be, using a social perspective as benchmark. In all probability, the organisation will be a closer match to one social perspective than either of the other two social perspectives for that level of work. After performing the matching or profiling exercise to a specific social perspective for each level of work, the organisation needs to include initiatives in its leadership development strategy to close the gap between its current status and the benchmark status, as defined by that specific social perspective. It is not advised that, when an organisation matches one social perspective significantly more than any other, it should change its leadership development course and attempt to migrate from matching one social perspective to another, unless it has been decided as part of the overall organisational strategy to change the course of the leadership development process.

#### *Leadership Development Process Maturity Index (LDPMI™)*

This section describes the development of the LDPMI™. The LDPMI™ is a quantitative instrument with which an organisation can measure, not only to what extent it focuses on the most critical areas of the leadership development process, but also to what extent it is steering away from the most non-critical areas – areas that are a waste of resources and energy, with poor returns. Practically, the scores of this index for each of the levels of work could be used to drive the right organisational behaviour and focus with regard to the leadership development process.

The LDPMI™ is an instrument that is based on the same questionnaire used to gather the data for developing the SPP instrument discussed in the previous section. Whereas the SPP instrument focuses on feedback regarding the most critical and most non-critical, as well as distinguishing statements for all factors for the three levels of leadership, the LDPMI™ focuses only on the consolidated factor responses for each level of leadership, based on responses to only the most critical and most non-critical statements. In short, the Index indicates where organisations should be focusing or not focusing its leadership development efforts.

Where a specific statement was categorised as most critical in more than one of the factors in a level of work, that statement was included only once in the Index, compared to being included each time it occurred in different factors or social perspectives in using the SPP instrument. The same applies to most non-critical statements – if a specific

statement was categorised as most non-critical in more than one of the factors in a level of work, that statement was included only once in the Index for that level of work.

Another feature of the Index is that, whenever a specific statement was highlighted as most critical in one factor of a certain level of work, but as the opposite (most non-critical) in another factor for that same level of work, it was disregarded and not included in the Index. There are two reasons for this. First, the Index can only include unopposed most critical and most non-critical statements. If there was disagreement on a specific statement between factors in the same level of work, that statement was considered inconclusive and therefore had to be disregarded. The second reason is that it does not make sense to score the same statement for a specific level of work twice – once from a most critical point of view and then again from a most non-critical point of view. The result of this “elimination” exercise and the fact that a specific statement was only included once, even though it might have occurred in more than one factor for a specific level of work, resulted in the following statement counts, which are different for each level of work:

- Supervisory level or junior management: 11 most critical and 13 most non-critical statements.
- Middle management: 9 most critical and 10 most non-critical statements.
- Senior management: 11 most critical and 11 most non-critical statements.

Based on the questionnaire feedback, where each respondent answered “Yes” or “No” to either conforming or not conforming to that specific statement’s requirement for that level of work, the answers are scored as follows:

- if “Yes” is the answer to a most critical requirement statement, 2 index points are awarded, because the organisation is actively focusing on a critical area that has been identified as most critical to the success of the leadership development process;
- if “No” is the answer to a most non-critical requirement statement, 1 index point is awarded, because the organisation is not wasting resources and energy on implementing an area that the experts have deemed most non-critical;
- if “No” is the answer to a most critical requirement statement, 0 index points are awarded, because the organisation is not actively focusing on an area that has been identified as most critical to the success of the leadership development process; and
- if “Yes” is the answer to a most non-critical requirement statement, 0 index points are awarded, because the organisation is spending resources and energy on implementing an area that the experts regarded as most non-critical.

It then follows that the maximum amount of index points that could be scored by any organisation is as follows:

- Supervisory or junior management level: 35 points, consisting of 11 most critical statements multiplied by 2, equalling a maximum of 22 Index points, plus a maximum of 13 points for the most non-critical statements.
- Middle management level: 28 points, consisting of 9 most critical statements multiplied by 2, equalling a maximum of 18 Index points, plus a maximum of 10 points for the most non-critical statements.
- Senior management level: 33 points, consisting of 11 most critical statements multiplied by 2, equalling a maximum of 22 Index points, plus a maximum of 11 points for the most non-critical statements.

There is a minimum threshold percentage score of 35 per cent though for the overall Index, which equates to a score of 34 out of a possible 96, where the 96 is calculated as follows:

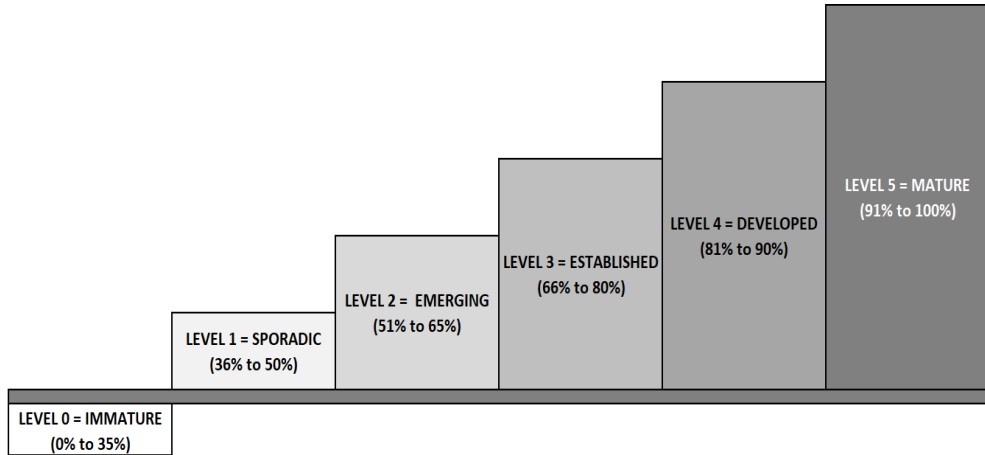
34 (for the most non-critical requirement statements) + (2× a score of 31 for the most critical requirement statements)

$$= 34 + 62 = 96$$

Without a threshold value in the Index, an organisation could do nothing about the leadership development process and still score points in the Index by also answering “No” to all the most non-critical requirement statement questions, resulting in a score of 35 per cent. Therefore, Level 1, as the second maturity dimension, starts at 36 per cent. The maturity dimensions of the Index were adapted from the research by Johansson et al. (2019), with the “sporadic” and “developed” dimensions added in the present study. The reason for adding these two dimensions was to allow for more steps, signalling progress, which plays an important role in motivating the organisation to move to the next dimension in the Index.

The maturity dimensions of the LDPMI™ are illustrated in Figure 2.

Each of the maturity dimension levels of this Index represents a level of adherence to the leadership development process criteria that have been identified in the present study.



**Figure 2:** Maturity dimensions of the LDPMI™

*Using the LDPMI™ as instrument*

The scores calculated from the “Yes” and “No” answers from the consolidated case study questionnaire are used to calculate a total score, which is interpreted as a percentage of the maximum possible score. This percentage is then classified under the corresponding maturity dimension of the LDPMI™ for each level of work or for the whole organisation (see Figure 2).

This quantitative measurement of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process will reflect to what extent there is conformance between where the organisation or level of work is currently, versus where it should be. The organisation should then aim to increasingly adhere to the single set of leadership development process criteria to which the Index was applied. The more adherence there is to this set of criteria, the more mature an organisation would be in terms of its leadership development process. Improved maturity will be reflected in an improved Index score and reaching a higher maturity dimension or level as a result. The value of the LDPMI™ instrument is not in achieving a specific Index score, but to use it as an instrument for continuous improvement where the organisation moves, for example, from maturity dimension level 2 to level 3 by starting to focus on the right areas in its leadership development process.

In using this Index, the person completing the questionnaire should be mindful of conformance across the whole organisation for each level of work, and not only focus on pockets of excellence, which would distort the results.

### **Phase 3 – Validation of the Measure**

#### *Participating organisations*

After discussions with these organisations with regard to a voluntary contribution to this study, the consolidated case study questionnaire was sent to the most senior members of their executive team who oversee their complete leadership development process. They were the most appropriate people to provide an accurate account of the leadership development process in their organisations. The feedback from this questionnaire was then used as input to validate both the SPP and LDPMI™ instruments.

When reporting the results for Company 1 and Company 2, the advice of VandenBos (2013, p. 32) was taken into account, to (i) summarise the collected data and the analysis that was performed on the data, (ii) report the data in sufficient detail to justify the conclusions, (iii) mention all relevant results, including those that countered expectations, and (iv) not hide uncomfortable results by omission.

The two case study companies were leading organisations in the manufacturing and financial services industries, and had been in business for many decades, with a large customer base and vast operations across southern Africa. The results of the measure were analysed from which it was possible to make recommendations for both companies, overall and for each level of work. These are discussed in the next sections.

#### *Interpreting the results from both instruments – Company 1*

The assessment results of the SPP and LDPMI™ instruments were aligned, which supported the validity of the overall measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process. The assessment results of the SPP measurement indicated that middle management was much more closely matched to the “tailored” social perspective than what the supervisory or junior management level was to the “nurture” perspective and what senior management was to the “people-centred” perspective.

Similar results were observed in the Index scores: middle management scored 75 per cent, compared to 57 per cent for the supervisory level or junior management and 55 per cent for senior management. Although the Index scores of the supervisory or junior management and senior management levels were similar, the SPP instrument’s results show that the senior management level leadership development process would require less work to perfectly match the “people-centred” perspective, compared to the work that is required at the supervisory level or junior management leadership development process to match the “nurture” perspective.

Company 1 is advised to increase its focus on developing the two leadership levels that are less mature than middle management, where it should at least maintain the good progress that it is currently making at this second level of work. This approach will ensure alignment across all three levels of work, and after that Company 1 should

advance all three levels simultaneously towards the ultimate goal of an Index score of between 91 per cent and 100 per cent, categorised as Level 5: Mature.

### *Interpreting the results from both instruments – Company 2*

Although the same high level of alignment between the results from both instruments was not present in the middle management level of Company 2, as was the case in Company 1, the results for the other levels of work for Company 2 revealed valuable insights. For both the supervisory or junior management and senior management levels, the required developmental areas that were highlighted by the social perspectives that it matched the closest, were also reflected in the detail of their corresponding Indexes. In fact, for each of these levels of work only one area from the social perspectives did not occur in the Index detail. Although the two instruments are based on different approaches, this observation supported its credibility in terms of highlighting to organisations the areas that should be focused on from a leadership development process point of view.

## Ethical Considerations

Flick (2007) strongly argues that it is unethical to expect people to take part in research if the research is not of the highest quality. The researchers in this study also did not prioritise the search for truth at the expense of the rights of the individuals involved. With an awareness that ethical issues in research are becoming increasingly important, and that these issues would be particularly pertinent, the researchers made a concerted effort to uphold research ethics throughout the study, as recommended by Creswell (2014). This view is supported by Braun and Clarke (2013), who explain that integrity in research means that no data may be misrepresented, and that other researchers' work cannot be used without acknowledgement. As pointed out by Gray (2018), part of research ethics is to design a study in such a way that it will yield accurate and trustworthy results. This was the aim throughout the present research study.

These ethical considerations were met before conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during the data collection, during the data analysis and with the storage of the data. It included adherence to the Code of Ethics of the University of Johannesburg, sending introductory emails to the research participants, the signing of consent and audio recording permission forms, and ensuring that the identities of the research participants and participating organisations were protected.

## Contribution and Value of the Study

This research study makes a significant and unique contribution to the leadership development body of knowledge. From the extensive literature review conducted in the secondary research phase, it was obvious that there is a lack of research on Afrocentric



leadership development. This view is supported by authors such as Bolden and Kirk (2009), Geber and Keane (2013), Kuada (2010), and Mbigi (2005).

The present study focused extensively on extracting an Afrocentric perspective of the critical success areas that are required for leadership development in organisations. This dealt with the gap in the knowledge identified by Chawane (2016), that Eurocentric literature does not acknowledge African perspectives. The combination of the Eurocentric and Afrocentric approaches resulted in the identification of a complementary, inclusive, and comprehensive approach to leadership development, as called for by Iwowo (2015).

The current body of knowledge on leadership development does not include a measurement instrument or tool to assess the maturity of the organisational leadership development process. The present research study dealt with these gaps by developing and validating the measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process, consisting of the SPP and LDPMI™ instruments, which can be applied to individual levels of leadership and overall to organisations in southern Africa.

### Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is that it was not practicable for the researchers to be present when the research participants completed the Q-sorting exercise. Being present would have made it easier to guide them through the process. To mitigate this limitation, the researchers put a number of measures in place though to make it clear and easy for the participants to successfully complete the Q-sort process. Finally, post-Q-sort interviews were conducted to ensure that the data were comprehensive, specifically with regard to the placement of the extreme column statements for each of the three levels of work.

Another limitation is that neither of the instruments in the measure of the maturity of the leadership development process caters for a range at organisational or leadership level. If an organisation has, for example, only implemented a leadership development intervention or area in half of its operations for a specific level of work, does it answer “Yes” or “No” against that question in the consolidated questionnaire? Therefore, no room for partial compliance exists. One way of dealing with this limitation though is to answer the questionnaire from a best-case scenario point of view, assuming that the organisation will then drive the implementation of that intervention in the other areas of the business, in a short space of time.

### Recommendations for Future Research

The biggest research opportunity lies in replicating this study in another region or continent. Another research opportunity would be to use a larger set of southern African

organisations, including non-profit organisations, to further validate the measure. Finally, the methodology used in this study, including the Q methodology, could be used to develop similar measures of maturity for disciplines other than leadership development.

## Conclusion

Not only has the measure of the maturity of the organisational leadership development process been developed in this research study, but it has also been successfully validated in two, large southern African organisations. As shown in Table 1, the SPP and LDPMI™ instruments, although different, were developed based on similar sets of data, gathered and analysed using the Q methodology. The two instruments complement each other, and there is no conflict or contradiction between the two.

The SPP instrument focuses on matching the leadership development process to one of three social perspectives for each level of work. The LDPMI™ instrument, on the other hand, is used to calculate a score for a combination of only most critical and most non-critical areas for all factors, for a specific level of work or the organisation as a whole. Both these instruments clearly identify areas that require attention in order to enhance the maturity of the organisation's leadership development process.

There is no “silver bullet” to leadership development, but organisations in southern Africa are now finally in a position to gauge and improve their leadership development processes for each level of work or leadership, by using a comprehensive measure that represents “what works in Africa”.

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