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Hunhu: In Search of an Indigenous Philosophy for the Zimbabwean Education System¹

Practice without thought is blind: thought without practice is empty²

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Abstract

The Zimbabwean education system is currently grounded in a philosophy of education that is alien. This means that the education that it offers to the majority of the people in Zimbabwe and the values that it inculcates are alien and cannot result in authentic existence. It is therefore essential to search for a philosophy that will bring relevance to the education system – an education system that emanates from the existential historical circumstances of the people. We argue that for the education system at any level to be relevant, it must have its foundations in the philosophy of *hunhu*. It is not being argued that the philosophy of *hunhu* be one of the philosophical foundations, but that it be *the* foundation of Zimbabwean education.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of relevance in the Zimbabwean education system is an historically situated problem that elicits the deconstruction of the colonial inherited education system and a reconstruction of the root, the philosophical foundation of Zimbabwean education system. The necessity for a reconstruction of the Zimbabwean education system emanates from the fact that pre-colonial Zimbabwean philosophy which informed African indigenous education was vitiated and condemned by missionaries and other Europeans as primitive and backward (Ocitti, 1994). The Zimbabweans and other Africans described by Hatch (1959:9) as isolated “from outside contact”, were reified and their philosophy, that is, metaphysical beliefs, axiological orientations and epistemological assumptions that formed the bedrock of indigenous education were dismissed as superstition. Because the foundations of African education were

1 Ubuntu and hunhu mean the same.

2 Nkrumah, 1978:78



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denied, missionary and Western thinking became the basis of colonial education provided to Zimbabweans. Indeed, Baker is quoted by Ocitti (1994:14) as having argued with reference to Africans in colonial Zimbabwe that:

The children of this land are nonentities. Nothing at all is done for them [by way of education]. They feed, sit about, and sleep and in this manner they grow until the time comes for them to do something. They have no nurseries, no tea parties, no birthdays and no instruction from their parents. They are there and that is all. Their lives are one big nothing.

This justified the introduction of Occidental education rooted in Occidental philosophies of education by the missionaries. Thus, the Western philosophical assumptions provided the philosophical foundations for Western education that was introduced to the Zimbabweans. Needless to say, this philosophy and the education grounded in it were alien to the Zimbabwean people and resulted in alienated and inauthentic existence resulting in products whose “values and the facts of their lives did not hang together” (Sartre, 1968:8) and who displayed “crisis in identity” (Forster, 2007: para 5).

In so far as the present education system remains rooted in Western philosophy and therefore traditions, it continues to be alien to the Zimbabweans rendering their existence mimetic and inauthentic. It leaves Zimbabweans in a state of “uprootedness” (Makuvaza, 2008:373) precisely because their thinking remains rooted in Western theories of knowledge, values and beliefs which reflect deep-seated mental colonisation. Authenticity, and, for that reason, relevance can only be attained with the reclamation of the indigenous Zimbabwean philosophy rooted in the philosophy of *hunhu/ ubuntu/unhu/vunhu* (which we will henceforth refer to as *hunhu*) which is the basis of African metaphysics, axiology and epistemology. It is when *hunhu* starts to inform the reconstruction of the Zimbabwean education system that it becomes genuine because this philosophy is germane to Zimbabwe. *Hunhu* has the potential to “rescue [African] people from their loss of identity: to let them regain their cultural and social values and to let them experience themselves as human beings with dignity” (Sebedi quoted in Venter, 2004:152). It is only then that it will result in the production of *munhu ane hunhu* (a complete, educated person) or as the Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999:61) puts it, “a human being in the fullest and noblest sense”, one who is “caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed” (Venter, 2004:150). It is being argued here that *hunhu* is not an imported but an indigenous philosophy rooted in the experiences of the indigenous Africans that should permeate the

epistemological, axiological and ontological underpinnings of Zimbabwean education systems. It is a philosophy that valorises being human and the interconnectedness of human beings and therefore affirms life. Indeed, Venter (2004:150) argues that *hunhu* is “of great importance in an African educational discourse”.

THE STATE OF THE CURRENT PHILOSOPHY INFORMING ZIMBABWEAN EDUCATION

On the attainment of independence in 1980, colonial philosophies of education were supposedly replaced by a new philosophy of education, a philosophy rooted in Scientific Socialism, or, Marxist – Leninist philosophy (Ushewokunze, 1985:ii). In line with the thrust of Marxism-Leninism, there was a wave of advocacy for the teaching of Marxist – Leninist philosophy and Political Economy in all educational institutions in Zimbabwe as a way of making Zimbabweans appreciate Scientific Socialism (Ushewokunze, 1985, Chung and Ngara, 1985).

Indeed, at one time, Political Economy was being taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools. An experiment in the application of Marxist-Leninist philosophy manifested itself in the concept of **Education with Production**. This fascination with Scientific Socialism was premised on its supposed close approximation to “the socialist egalitarianism of the traditional African society” (Nkrumah, 1978:78). This brief flirtation with Scientific Socialism ended in the first decade of independence with the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism as a philosophy guiding socio-economic and political development in Zimbabwe. The result has been an absence of a deliberately crafted philosophy of education to provide the philosophical foundations for the education systems extant in Zimbabwe.

Without a philosophic base there is no direction, no authentic values to propagate for values emanate from philosophical assumptions (Luthuli, 1982). There was therefore, a relapse into the philosophies operative during the colonial era which, contrary to African beliefs entrenched individualism (Venter, 2004:151). Indeed Van Eck (2010:7) argues, “Western civilization has traditionally been built on the premise that the world is made up of individual discreet units”. This Western mindset is aptly expressed in Descartes’, “I think, therefore I am”, which we take to be the most succinct expression of the basis of Western individualism. Within the colonial education system, this was expressed in the initiation of African learners into western individualism through such teachings as, *Ini ndini, Iwe ndiwe*, (I am, You are) which emphasised the individual separatedness from other members of the community. This indeed was contrary to African philosophy which stressed the “essential unity of self and other, self and the entire Kosmos” and “being-human-together” (Foster, 2007: para 47).

We are not the first to be conscious of the absence of a genuinely indigenous philosophy of education that could provide the foundation for the education system in Zimbabwe. Two years into Zimbabwe's independence, Horton (1982:44) observed that the nature of education in Zimbabwe resembled:

something like Siamese twins. One of the twins shows signs of interesting originality in such things as the concept of education with production, the adult literacy programmes, the ZINTEC [Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course] mode of teacher training. The other twin reflects the continuing existence of external and foreign examination systems with their enormous influence on syllabi, the imposition of a competitive, elitist pedagogy on what is now a mass system of schooling ...

He then argues that most schools continued to follow the colonial model of education. What he was not aware of then was that the concept of education with production was not destined to go beyond the experimental stage and that what was needed was an education that was unique to the Zimbabwean circumstances.

Another scholar, Mudzamba (1982) notices the absence of philosophical grounding of Zimbabwean education as early as 1982 when he proposes the adoption of Hirst's seven forms of knowledge. Mudzamba (1982:5) argues that when Hirst proposed "liberal education based on the seven forms of knowledge, he was aiming at western systems of education" which he believed needed to be philosophically grounded. Mudzamba maintains that it is the same seven forms of knowledge that inform the Zimbabwean school curricula. While Mudzamba does not propose a new philosophy of education he advocates what can be regarded as some form of indigenisation of the curriculum. He views Hirst's seven forms of knowledge as the skeleton of education which needs to be dressed in "local idiom, language and complexion" through infusing Zimbabwean content in the form of events, rituals, prayers, and other issues (Mudzamba, 1982:8). Such an approach could not have been anything more than cosmetic.

Almost along the same lines as Mudzamba, Mhundwa (1982:34) also recognises the need to indigenise the curriculum arguing that there was a need to develop *hunhu* (which he equates to *paideia* – the thing for which he [the individual] is born, the sum of intellectual, moral and aesthetic qualities that make him a complete man). However, Mhundwa (1982:34) proposes nothing beyond saying the focus on education should be "on imparting knowledge related to African culture and developing attitudes that are socially accepted".

The setting up of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in Zimbabwe (1999) was an indictment against the existing education system and the philosophy that informed it. Recognising the absence of a Zimbabwean

philosophy of education, the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999:33), among other recommendations for the philosophy of education for the 21st century has the following recommendation: “The philosophy should, among other things, spell out the type of person that the education system should produce in order to promote a successful nation”. The Commission (1999:33) further recommends that among other things, the product of the proposed education system should be “a product who has morality and ability to learn from the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu*”. In other words, the Nziramasanga Commission Report proposes that *hunhu* should be one of the aims of education in Zimbabwe.

The absence of a coherent philosophy of education in Zimbabwe manifests itself in the products of the education system who demonstrate a lack of moral focus, respect for other people, are intolerant and corrupt (Report by the Presidential Commission, 1999). It even manifests itself in the conduct of business and the practice of politics. There is a general lack of moral integrity and focus among the populace. We have very high levels of intolerance of views that differ from our own resulting in attempts to deny citizens the human right to make independent decisions on social, economic, political and cultural issues that affect their lives. The consequence has been political turmoil and socio-economic melt-down (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Shizha, 2010). For a pint of beer, a life can be snuffed. We have become incapable of appreciating diversity of thinking and opinion. Events in the political realm demonstrate that we are incapable of dialogue amongst ourselves as citizens of Zimbabwe. We no longer know how we should relate to each other as human beings. Dehumanisation seems to characterise our existence (Kaulemu, 2004). In education, at secondary and tertiary levels, it appears fine to exploit students, to ask for sexual favours for marks! In hospitals you die if you do not pay the specialists a bribe. The Hippocratic Oath has lost significance (Zimdev, 2011). In business, it is believed that one’s business will not prosper without *muti* which involves ritual sacrifice (Simmons, 2000). It is trifle to harvest human sperms and other human parts and to sacrifice young children to boost one’s business (NewsDay, 2 April, 2013). Where are our values? What has happened to professional ethics? Human life is no longer sacred. It has become expendable. Corruption has become endemic and normal business. Are these not pointers to the lack of values in the education that is being inculcated to the learners? It is our view that the absence of a clearly articulated philosophy of education with well enunciated values helps to explain these vices that have come to characterise our society.

Indeed, within the political realm Manda (2009, para 6) argues, “The eclipse of *Ubuntu* [*hunhu*] has darkened the spirit of modern-day African political systems”. Explaining this eclipse, Nussbaum in Manda (2009, para 7) argues:

The eclipse of Ubuntu has been manifested in most of the leaders after independence whereby the leader was the centre of everything being considered as the main reference, losing thereby the essence of Ubuntu that focuses on the community up-building.

Violence begets violence. Intolerance does no one good. These can only lead to the dehumanisation of the perpetrators of violence and intolerance as much as they dehumanise those whose humanity is violated. Even schools have become play grounds for the dehumanisation of both students and teachers. The teachers have become castrated, stripped of their dignity so that it is impossible for them to be role models for the community in terms of moral rectitude as well as in terms of the knowhow which they possess which at times they are required to deny. Being the other or otherness has become criminalised. Diversity in languages, histories, values, customs, political opinions and religious beliefs has become a curse.

Indeed the Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999:63) states:

People have expressed distress about the moral decadence that seem to have set in and was running through all the strata of society. A loss of discipline and sound human, cultural and religious values are major concerns of the society. It was pointed out that there was a dearth of role models in teachers, politicians, family, society, and, in particular, in the programmes that entered homes through the electronic media, especially the television.

It is, therefore, in the context of the above that we propose the adoption of *hunhu* as the philosophical foundation of postcolonial Zimbabwean education system. *Hunhu* would provide the values that would guide Zimbabwean education. It has the greatest potential to restore human dignity and respect for other human beings. We are not arguing that *hunhu* be one of the aims or goals of the education system, but that it should be the foundation. It is therefore important to explore and explicate various conceptions of the philosophy of *hunhu* that have been proffered by other writers on the topic.

UNDERSTANDING THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUNHU

In defining *hunhu*, Samkange and Samkange (1980:34) wrote;

Hunhuism or *Ubuntuism* is, therefore, a philosophy that is the experience of thirty five thousand years of living in Africa. It is a philosophy that sets a premium on human relations.

Relatedness, according to this view is central to *hunhu*. Thus, the philosophy of *hunhu* is best captured in the aphorism, *kunzi munhu vanhu* or *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* translated, “a person is a person through other persons” (Shutte, 1993:46)

or “To be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others in its infinity variety of content and form” (Louw, 1998, para 3). Indeed as Louw argues, *ubuntu* enjoins us to have “respect for particularity, individuality and historicity” which goes against oppressive conformity. This stresses the need for tolerance of diversity of perceptions, perspectives and practices. In other words, we cannot deny the humanity of others without denying our own humanity. Because the individual’s identity is a product of social processes, Louw describes *hunhu* as “a unifying vision or world view” which serves as “the spiritual foundation of African societies”. Along the same line Ramose (1999:49) argues, “*Ubuntu* then is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology ... *ubuntu* may be seen as the basis of African philosophy”.

Tutu (quoted in Hord & Lee, 2008: para, 26) describes *ubuntu* thus:

It is the essence of being human. It speaks to the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.

To lose one’s humanity is to lose the penultimate purpose of life. One can lose one’s humanity through failing to relate to others as human beings, through failing to identify and place one’s self in appropriate relations with others.

Hunhu is attractive because at one level, it “underscores the importance of agreement or consensus” (Louw, 1998, para 6) and at another level it “acknowledges that reality is a dynamic whole in a constant change, an explication of the undivided whole that is in a perpetual state of flux” (Forster, 2007: para 13). Manda (2009) avows that *hunhu* leads to a comprehensive understanding of the process of cultivating cohesion and positive human interaction with one another and with creation in daily life. Central to *hunhu*, according to Louw, is *humwelsimunye* (we are one or unity is strength). Forster (2007:259) argues that *hunhu* is, “the communal way of life which deems that society must be run for the sake of all, requiring cooperation as well as sharing and charity *Ubuntu* consequently, is the quality of being human”.

In other words, in the philosophy of *hunhu*, to be human is to be in participation with others. Hence, among important principles Gelfand, (1973) calls them cardinal virtues of life articulated in *hunhu* are respect for human life, respect for others, human dignity, compassion, an awareness of the needs of others, kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people, a code of behaviour, an appreciative attitude to other people and to life. Nziramasanga (1999:62) adds the following principles, responsibility, honesty, justice, trustworthiness, courage, diligence, tolerance, hard work, integrity, a cooperative spirit, solidarity, hospitality, devotion to family and the welfare of the community. Manda (2009) avows that *hunhu* stresses reciprocal, ethical responsibility that flows from interconnectedness and common humanity. On her part, Nussbaum (quoted in Manda, 2009, para 5) explains that these are all in the interest of “building and maintaining community”. Thus, community becomes the ultimate interest of *hunhu*, that for which individuals sacrifice even life. Indeed it is wrong to argue as Louw (1998: para 8) does that *hunhu* “has a potential dark side in terms of which it demands an oppressive conformity and loyalty to the group” for tolerance is an important value cherished in *hunhu*. In fact, Shutte (2001:9) argues that in *hunhu*, “the community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up, it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life”. Ramose (1999:79) shares the same view when he argues that African conception of personhood does not deny human individuality, but “ascribes ontological primacy to the community through which the human individual comes to know both themselves and the world around them”. The very demand for consensus militates against such a scenario as envisaged by Louw (1998) as it will be inconsistent with *hunhu*. Indeed, *hunhu* calls for “an honest appreciation of differences” (Louw, 1998: para 8) while at the same time emphasising, “Your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, and your salvation is my salvation” (Nussbaum quoted in Manda, 2009, para 5). *Hunhu* emphasises dialogue among people for the edification of the community. It reflects love for others (Gelfand, 1973). For this very reason in the philosophy of *hunhu*, we are our brothers’ keepers.

Hunhu recognises the need to respect otherness and not to treat it as a threat but an inevitable fact of life. *Hunhu* promotes what Cobbah (1987:325) terms “we-thinking”, that is, from the perspective of promoting human dignity. Hence, Manda (2009, para 1) argues that *hunhu* can be advocated in the “promotion of ethics for mankind”. *Hunhu* emphasises our interconnectedness as human beings and our inseparability from the world in which we live. The values that epitomise *hunhu* are attractive in that they are life affirming. The challenge is how to promote these ideals in such a manner that they influence how we behave and interact as well as perceive others. Therein reposes the role of education for *hunhu*.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

For Peters (1967:1), education refers to “no particular process; rather, it encapsulates criteria to which any one of a family of processes must conform”. Earlier on in 1966 he had stated the criteria, “the first concerning its matter, the second its manner, and the third its cognitive perspective” (Peters, 1966:46). Peters (1967) goes on to argue that the term education is a stamp approval. To be educated is to “succeed in relation to certain tasks on which a learner and the teacher have been engaged for a considerable period of time” (Peters, 1967:2). He further regards education as initiation of the learner into “something he has to master, know or remember” (Peters, 1967:3). He then argues that for a process to count as education, it must involve the use of “morally legitimate procedures” (Peters, 1967:3). Furthermore, what is learnt must be “worthwhile” and must result in “some desirable state of mind” (Peters, 1967:5). Crucial to Peters’ (1966, 1967) conception of education is that the person who is educated does not remain the same. She/He is transformed for the better by the education that she receives.

In line with education as initiation, Chung and Ngara (1985:86) argue that education performs two functions in society:

Firstly, it provides the individuals with the skills and capabilities necessary for him or her to carry out certain tasks, normally within a given class structure. These tasks may include teaching, nursing, typing or operating a machine. Secondly, it is used to pass on the dominant religious or political ideology which helps to perpetuate the existing social structure.

They proceed to argue that education has the potential to shape consciousness and change “the people’s way of thinking” (Chung & Ngara, 1985:87).

For Musaaazi as quoted in Zvobgo (1999:ix):

The primary goal of education is to harness and develop, man’s talents and potentialities so that he can fulfil his moral, intellectual and material needs and contribute effectively to the general survival and development of society.

The above transformative views of education cohere with Freire’s (1972) assertion that no education is ever neutral. Education has the power to maintain the status quo or to transform society depending on the agenda that is set for it. If no education is ever neutral, it means education always serves a purpose because it is always based on some philosophic base whether or not we are aware of it. It is either conservative, maintaining the status quo, or transformative. It appears that it was from this understanding that the Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999:554) observed, “the crying need to overhaul the entire education and training system” in Zimbabwe.

In the overhaul of the education system in Zimbabwe, the ideal end of education should be the production of *munhu ane hunhu* (the production of a complete individual). But we can only come up with *munhu ane hunhu* through an education system grounded in *hunhu*. Consequently, this discussion is in an attempt to contribute towards the fulfilment of one of the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999:557), which is to, “Develop a Zimbabwean philosophy of education that promotes a citizen with *Unhu*” while at the same time arguing for a philosophy of education that would result in a more humane education that seeks to produce individuals who continually strive to become better human beings.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION FOR HUNHU

Nussbaum quoted in Manda (2009, para 5), invites us to “imagine the potential of [*hunhu*]ubuntu’s sunlight, were it to be embraced as a vital part of the African renaissance or even as Africa’s contribution to help a divided, fragmented world”. Indeed the call to recommend *hunhu* to the larger world was first proposed by Samkange and Samkange (1980) when they argue that *hunhu* may be Africa’s unique contribution to the world. The same call is reiterated by Panse (2006: para 3) when he argues, “Perhaps the world would be a more peaceful place if more emphasis was placed on teaching respect, decency, and tolerance, on teaching *hunhu*” (<http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/7-22-2006-103206.asp>).

We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationships. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face”, says Biko quoted by Forster (2007:245).

While he may not have been focusing on *hunhu* in particular, Cobbah (1987:326) shares the same view on African worldviews arguing, “coming from a society in which the worldview emphasizes commonality rather than individuality, we may have something to contribute to the international fecundation of concepts about human rights and human dignity”. This resort to education for *hunhu* is informed by the conviction similar to the one expressed by Mandela (1994:542):

I have always known that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than the opposite. ... Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished. In other words it is possible to cultivate love, tolerance, peace and a spirit of harmony.

If this conviction is inculcated through education, the focus will be individuals who promote societal well-being through observing the principles of *hunhu* enunciated above. What this means is inculcating respect for others as much as we would like them to respect us. So, the principle of reciprocity as encapsulated in the golden rule becomes central to the philosophy of education for *hunhu*. A creative re-engagement of the philosophy of *hunhu* would guard against the possibility of destructive Herd mentality. *Hunhu* advocates, using Cobbah's (1987:324) phrase, "social learning and collective survival" as its focus is on communal well-being and the pursuit of human dignity. It focuses on what it means to be truly human. Indeed, with *hunhu* as the philosophic base of Zimbabwean education, learners will be taught that, "to be educated is not to have arrived: it is to travel with a different view" (Peters, 1967:8), a view that values being humane. We can further borrow from Peters (1967:6) contention that, "To be educated requires ... some understanding of principles, of the 'reason why' of things" so that the focus will always be on acting rationally and for the good of all. Furthermore, being educated implies "the possession of knowledge and understanding", which implies a grasp of the consequences of all intended action (Peters, 1967:6-7). Indeed, to be educated suggests all-round development. In other words, education implies that a person's outlook is transformed by what she knows so that the individual reflects and demonstrates a wide cognitive perspective. This means that education informed by *hunhu* becomes a "tool for building or developing citizens that are enlightened and critical about their social conditions" (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2010:107).

In an education grounded in *hunhu*, treating others people as humans becomes concretised through the principles that are enumerated above. Thus, education based on *hunhu* would emphasise "warmth, empathy, understanding, the ability to communicate, interaction, participation, sharing, reciprocation, harmony, cooperation" (Prinsloo, 1998:42). The education informed by the philosophy of *hunhu* gives primacy to the social basis of human life in all learning activities. Human dignity is central because *kunzi munhu vanhu* (we confirm our humanity through interacting with other human beings). In line with this reasoning, Panse (2006: para 10) quotes the South African White Paper on the policy of *ubuntu* as stating that, "It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being". Thus, human dignity becomes the heart of any education that is informed by the philosophy of *hunhu*. *Hunhu* then, will result in an education that cultivates the universal brotherhood (sisterhood) of all human beings. This education will make the learners aware that we remain human in so far as we treat other human beings, black, white, yellow and others as human beings. Panse (2006: para 3) argues that *hunhu* offers us:

an understanding of ourselves in relation with the world. According to Ubuntu, there exists a common bond between us all and it is through this bond, through our interaction with our fellow human beings, that we discover our own human qualities.

In arguing for the adoption of *hunhu* as the foundation of the Zimbabwean education system we are informed by the view that *hunhu* introjects notions of the oneness of humanity and the universe which even science now recognises, into the minds of the learners. Indeed, Van Eck (2010:7) argues:

physics has now proven that there is more truth in the philosophies that traditionally embraced the concept of interconnectedness. Ubuntu is an example of these philosophies that are incompatible with the idea that we are each isolated and self-contained. The understanding of I am because you are, that we are all interconnected, is now being presented as scientific fact.

CONCLUSION

As the philosophic base of the Zimbabwean education system, *hunhu* will inform the aims and objectives, the content, and the methodologies of the Zimbabwean education system. It will provide the ethos that define being human in Zimbabwe. In other words, the adoption of *hunhu* as the philosophical foundation of the education system will necessitate the reconstruction of the curricula to include authentic African indigenous epistemologies, moral values, socio-political values as well as religious beliefs. Furthermore, in reconstructed curricula, *hunhu* would inform citizenship education, human rights education and it would permeate all aspects of school life in Zimbabwe. It is in this context that we argue for the adoption of *hunhu* as the philosophical foundation of Zimbabwean education, and indeed as a philosophy that should inform the socio-political systems extant in Zimbabwe thereby restoring the dignity of the African people in Zimbabwe and rendering their existence authentic. The philosophy of *hunhu* is important because it leads to the cultivation of sensitivity towards others as well as caring for how they feel as human beings.

By placing being human at the centre of education, the philosophy of *hunhu* results in a truly humane community, a community of interconnected beings. It results in respect for other persons that should promote social well-being through the development of interpersonal skills in learners. An education founded upon *hunhu* has the potential to create more tolerant communities that recognise that no other consideration should transcend the fact that we are human and need to treat each others as such if peace is to prevail. It will indeed lead to the affirmation of our common humanity as it will foster a view of personhood that promotes an integrated approach to consciousness and

being. This will result in a truly genuine Zimbabwean education that produces authentic people well grounded in their culture. *Hunhu* therefore calls upon Africans to be true to themselves, to be mentally liberated by being guided by an authentically African philosophy.

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