

Conceptualising Maslow's Self-Actualisation Concept for Application in Higher Education: An African Ubuntu Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on the applicability of Maslow's self-actualisation concept in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. An African perspective, guided by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, was used to inform the study. The study collected data from 30 participants comprising administrators in higher education institutions, lecturers and students and participants using in-depth interviews and observations. The participants were drawn from 5 participating higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Data were analysed using thematic procedures and the results show that unlike its Eurocentric individualistic perspective, self-actualisation represents a more inclusive concept from an Afrocentric perspective which is collectivist. Its application in higher education can enhance the student's overall educational outcomes throughout their studies, enabling them to immediately contribute positively to the good of society and others within and outside their institutions of learning, with integrity, empathy and compassion, without the condition of first fulfilling their own individual lower-level needs as theorised by Maslow. The study recommended the development of higher education policies that are imbedded in the Ubuntu philosophy.

Keywords: Ubuntu philosophy, self-actualisation, developmental stage, hierarchy of needs, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of self-actualisation, as submitted by Abraham Maslow, is widely accepted as an essential framework for understanding human motivation and personal growth. This concept encompasses the realisation of one's full potential, the pursuit of intrinsic goals, and the achievement of inner fulfilment. However, the application of Maslow's self-actualisation concept in higher education settings, particularly within the African context, requires careful consideration and contextualisation. This paper explores and conceptualises the application of Maslow's self-actualisation concept in higher education from an African perspective, taking into account the unique cultural values, educational goals, and socio-economic realities of the African continent. Through the conceptualisation of Maslow's self-actualisation within an African framework, this study contributes to the development of a more culturally relevant and impactful educational approaches that promote holistic student development and address the specific needs and aspirations of African learners in higher education.

Background of the Study

In his landmark article titled "The Theory of Human Motivation," Maslow promulgated a structure of human needs, arranged in a pyramid-shaped hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). His initial hierarchy consisted of