AUTOCHTHONOUS MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE/KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: There is a growing desire for more scientific and technical knowledge regarding Africa. This is because Africa has the potential and opportunity to generate impactful research. However, this potential is not optimized because of several constraints, including the lack of systematic reviews and models of knowledge management, and paradoxical trends in Africa.

Methodology: We review studies on knowledge management and paradoxes on Africa.

Findings: We propose a model and identify twelve paradoxes broadly categorized as industrial, political, and social.

Practical implications: The paradoxical tensions characteristic of Africa may be considered integral to business and policy rather than local expressions to be solved through international "best practice".

Value: The model we propose enables theoretical and empirical studies of knowledge management sensitive to the paradoxical tensions associated with autochthonous management knowledge (AMK) and autochthonous knowledge management (AKM).

Keywords: autochthonous knowledge management, autochthonous management knowledge, Africa, paradox.

INTRODUCTION

Early in this century a World Bank (2000) publication posed the question: can Africa claim the 21st Century? One way this question can be answered is for researchers to understand knowledge management and paradoxes in Africa. Knowledge management is a transformative mechanism that can contribute greatly to the productivity and prosperity of a nation (Bloom, Genakos, Sadun, and Van Reenen, 2012) because it is not only associated with wealth, innovation, and corporate performance (Romer, 1993; Wenger and Snyder, 2000) but it also accounts for differences in national development (Romer, 1993) as reflected in the United Nations economic commission for Africa's (UNECA) advocacy for "knowledge sharing on economic and social development of Africa" (http://knowledge4africa.uneca.org/).

Yet, there is a dearth of skill in knowledge management in Africa. A study by Gro-Ventures company estimated that compared to North America, with 2640 researchers per million persons or Europe, with 1990 per million, or even Latin America and Asia with 550 and 340 respectively, Africa has only 70 researchers per million persons.[1] One reason for this is the adoption of or dependence on Eurocentric models, strategies, knowledge, and epistemologies. Another is the lack of systematic reviews of knowledge production.

Consequently, we take stock of knowledge production in Africa by reviewing studies on knowledge management and associated paradoxes in Africa. We ask: *how can knowledge management capture unique facets of the African context without ignoring knowledge originating in Western contexts? How can local and global paradoxes contribute to the development of autochthonous African*

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[1] https://gro-intelligence.com/insights/infographics/research-capacity

knowledge? In so doing we contribute to the literature in three major ways. First, the clarity from the review helps scholars in the opposite camps – allochthons and autochthons – interested in the African context. Scholars can generate knowledge that is consistent with the expectations of the global community (i.e., the need to belong or be the same as the West) and with the Western dominant paradigm (Bloom et al., 2012), which has been perceived as possessing superior modern scientific methods (Zoogah, Nkomo, and Nyathi, 2012). Such scholars have been motivated by the need to produce knowledge that fits with the unique expectations of local communities. Our review provides a clear path for the increasing number of academics (George et al., 2016; Walsh, 2011, 2015; Yenkey, 2015; Zoogah, Zoogah, and Woldu, 2015) and practitioners (Chironga, Leke, Lund, and van Wamelen 2011) interested in Africa.

A second contribution focuses on the application of a paradox lens to the discussion of knowledge management paradoxes in Africa. Such a lens seems necessary, given the ontological deprivation effects on Africans (Zoogah, 2019) created by dependence on Western epistemology. The foreignness of those epistemologies suggests that the learning curve for African scholars is steeper, resulting in low scientific output. This is congruent with the ontological demands of Africa (Zoogah, 2019), and also mitigates the liability of foreignness (Zoogah, Zoogah, and Dalaba-Roohi, 2015). This "both/and" (Smith, Lewis, and Tushman, 2016) paradoxical reconciliatory approach fits the context of an increasingly interconnected and interactive global market in which African countries and firms play increasingly essential roles (Angwin, Mellahi, Gomes, and Peter, 2016; Ibeh, Wilson, and Chizema, 2012). Earlier studies used a paradox lens (Smith and Lewis, 2011) to compare Western with Eastern Asian epistemes (e.g., Li, 2016). However, in a recent special issue some researchers advocated the use of paradox theory to compare Western and

African management knowledge epistemes (see Gomes, Cunha, Zoogah, Wood, and Li, 2020). We respond to calls from scholars who suggest that a multi-perspective and integrative approach is essential to advance management knowledge (Suddaby, Hardy, and Huy, 2011; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012).

Next, we review the literature on knowledge management, focusing on paradoxes in Africa. After identifying two types of knowledge management in Africa and discussing their application, we propose a model outlining the dilemmatic features critical for knowledge management paradoxes – duality and tensions. We then discuss the major consequences of the tensions – identification – before the approaches to be adopted in the two types of knowledge management, autochthonous management knowledge (AMK) and autochthonous knowledge management (AKM). Although studies have proposed some types of knowledge management (see Davenport and Völpel, 2001), the types in this paper are more relevant to Africa because of their focus on autochthony. Consistent with Davenport and Völpel (2001), we conclude with outcomes of knowledge management for organizations and society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research suggests that Western-based management theories may be limited in capturing non-Western concepts and philosophies (Holtbrugge, 2013) including their contradictions and paradoxes. However, not much is known about the expression of organizational paradoxes regarding the African context (Gomes, Cunha, Zoogah, Wood and Li, 2020). Paradoxes do not emerge in social vacuum (Smith et al., 2016). Given that some contexts may elicit specific forms of contradiction, leading to different paradoxes, and other contexts may tolerate contradictions more

than others (Peng and Nisbett, 1999), it seems vital to explore the specificities of knowledge, management, and knowledge management in Africa.

African traditions diverge from those in the West. The different institutions, cultures, habits, and traditions of Africa can still shed light on our understanding of paradoxes because they are embedded with tensions. It is therefore unfortunate that only a handful of papers have examined paradoxes in Africa (e.g. Cunha, Fortes, Gomes, Rego, and Rodrigues, 2016).

Organizational tensions with paradoxical potential in Africa may involve the need to develop short-term flexibility while preparing organizations for the long run (Sarala, Cooper, Junni, and Tarba, 2014), combine foreign management practice with local culture (Gomes, Sahadev, Glaister, and Demirbag, 2014; Perrin, Rolland, and Stanley, 2007), offer standardized products or adapt them to local markets (Ang and Massingham, 2007), share knowledge by traditional or technological means (Kruger and Johnson, 2010), and deal with the tensions and contradictions of a colonial legacy in a post-colonial (and anti-colonial) era (Nkomo, 2011).

Paradox theory asserts that contradictions pervade social systems, and these contradictions are constitutive and permanent rather than anomalies to be willed away (Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart, 2016). Through a paradox lens, the combination of different, even antagonistic frameworks, does not necessarily appear as a factor of weakness. On the contrary, finding a space for creativity amid tension is a source of conceptual novelty. Cameron and Quinn (1988) referred to a paradox as a concept embracing contradiction and the clashing of ideas, "contradictory, mutually exclusive elements that are present and operate equally at the same time" (p. 2). Recently,

Smith and Lewis (2011, p.382) define paradox as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time".

The vibrant literature on paradoxes has mostly treated the theme following the traditions of East and West. From an Eastern perspective paradox has been approached with the lens of ancient Chinese philosophies such as the Yin-Yang (Li, 2016), which depicts the importance of balance and sees paradox as synergy and trade-off. From a western perspective paradox has a crucial philosophical lineage dating back to the ancient Greeks, which challenges the confidence in common sense assumptions and introduces the notion of ontological plurality, sometimes involving absurdities.

This both/and approach (Smith et al., 2016) is particularly relevant for the case of the articulation of Western/African management knowledge as there seem to be essential contributions for development coming from *both* tested global insights and conceptualizations *and* from local, situated contexts. Combining multiple and opposing perspectives and integrative approaches is therefore, from a paradox lens, an essential condition for the development of management knowledge that is *both* conceptually solid and empirically tested *and* valid for specific local contexts. This formulation echoes the rigor vs. relevance debate, and is important in fast-changing and increasingly global contexts in which different realities and people must interact, a view epitomized in the popular slogan advocated in the international business literature stating that firms need to think globally but act locally (Kefalas, 1998; Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2018). It requires the ability to overcome simplistic and polarized views, and to recognize and combine complex, diverse, and ambiguous realities into more integrative, yet pluralistic, understandings.

Knowledge management, the process of continually managing knowledge of all kinds to meet existing and emerging needs, to identify and exploit existing and acquired knowledge sets, and to develop new opportunities within entities (Khiste, Maske and Deshmukh, 2018), has been examined across disciplines, contexts, and levels. In a comprehensive review of the literature on management of knowledge in Africa, Zoogah and Nkomo (2013, pp. 9) assert that "there is a dearth of meaningful management knowledge in Africa." Various other scholars argue that the existing theoretical frameworks and managerial practices have been imported (mostly from the West) and without taking sufficient account of the local context (Amankwah-Amoah, Boso, and Debrah, 2017; Angwin et al., 2016). They argue for the development of management theories more suitable to the context of Africa (Gomes, Vendrell-Herrero, Mellahi, Angwin, and Sousa, 2018; Zoogah, 2008). For instance, while managerial knowledge and practices in African organizations have been mostly shaped by individualistic, instrumentalist, and competitive western theories and concepts, organizations face the paradox of having to operate in socio-cultural settings influenced by relational humanistic attributes such as *shemsw* (Zoogah, in press) and *ubuntu*, which characterize the collectivistic, paternalistic, and interdependent reciprocal obligations of Africa (Kamoche, Chizema, Mellahi, and Newenham-Kahindi, 2012; Nansubuga and Munene, 2020).

We conducted a search of the literature for studies on knowledge management in Africa. First, we searched *28 top-tier journals* in the management literature that we believe are likely to be interested in knowledge management. Using the term *"knowledge management in Africa"* we searched each journal's site for studies related to knowledge management and Africa, carefully avoiding studies that mention Africa or knowledge management but do not focus on knowledge management or the

African context. We found only 15 studies, 10 in the *Journal of Knowledge Management* followed by 3 in the *Africa Journal of Management*, 1 in *Journal of Management*, and 1 in *Thunderbird International Business Review* .

The paucity of studies in these major journals prompted us to conduct a second search in others using Google scholar. Most of the journals publishing studies on "knowledge management in Africa" are ranked low. The articles also range from the year 2006 (Kamoche and Harvey, 2006) in *Thunderbird International Business Review* to 2020 (Gomes et al., 2020; Lannon and Walsh, 2020; Nansubuga and Munene, 2020; Tigharsi, Bouguerra, Golgeci, and Rofcanin, 2020; Vendrell-Herrero, Darko, and Ghauri, 2020; Wood and Bischoff, 2020) in *Journal of Knowledge Management*. Most studies focus on management (21); others on economics (2), Medicine (2), Agriculture (2), information technology (3), non-governmental organizations (3), and Tourism (3). Still others focus on construction (1), libraries (1), education (1), and law (1). Concerning location, most (23) were generic (i.e., all African countries). The rest focused on Kenya (9), South Africa (2), Botswana (1), Nigeria (1), and Ghana (1). This review reveals a great scarcity of knowledge management studies on Africa.

 FINDINGS

Our literature review (see Table 1) identified several paradoxes in Africa. These are important to situate possible areas for creating knowledge about what is unique to African settings without ignoring other possible forms of knowledge. These paradoxes may be more applicable to Africa than other settings. Therefore, instead of considering that the major categories habitually identified cover the main types, we uncover possible local expressions of paradox. We identified 12

paradoxes categorized as industrial, political, social, and scholarship. Industrial paradoxes include the *ingenuity paradox* – Africa as the source or origin of ingenuity although being the least innovative in the present world (Hart, 2000, Loftu, 2005), *organization paradox* – management is increasingly demanded to transform African countries but the conditions for effective and professional management are being eroded (Zoogah, 2019), *knowledge paradox* – Africa is the origin of formal knowledge and literacy while remaining the least knowledgeable in the world today (Armah, 2018), *capital flight paradox* – Africa is supposed to be a capital-starved region (Tigharsi et al., 2020) but it is a capital exporter, and *resource* paradox – Africa possesses abundant resources and yet has the greatest poverty in the world (Maathai, 2011; Sachs and Warner, 2001). Political paradoxes include the *chieftaincy paradox* – "the empowerment of unelected traditional leaders often improves the responsiveness of democratic governments" (Baldwin, 2016, p. 5), *policy paradox* – African countries need to develop policies that contribute to societal transformation yet the policies they develop constrain productivity (Ayuk and Marouani, 2007), and *reform paradox* – African countries adopted structural adjustment programs to boost economic transformation but these led instead to deterioration because of the measures associated with their implementation (Hutchful, 2002).

Social paradoxes include aid, restoration, and wellbeing. The *aid paradox* (Moss, Petterson, and Van de Walle (2006) suggests that aid should enhance the welfare of African countries but instead it aggravates the penury by increasing dependency. The *restoration paradox* proposes that African countries have the greatest need for restoration but they have the greatest brain-drain (Skinner, 1999; Vieira and Alden, 2011) because conditions for retention are so discouraging. An important overarching paradox, in the domain of scholarship, is the *paradox of erudition*. It states that

Africans need to be different or unique in erudition, yet they focus on assimilative episteme. Not only do they use Western theories, but their logic also tends to be Greco-Roman. Further, philosophies and methodologies regarding empirical research tend to be Western (which ironically is transformed knowledge stolen from Africa in antiquity) (James, 1954). While industrial paradoxes focus on decision making, resources, and capacity, political paradoxes center on governance and its sub-processes of planning and change. Social paradoxes center on support structures, leadership, and identity. The overarching paradox focuses on general scholarship or epistemology.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

These knowledge management paradoxes suggest a need for models that encourage theorizing and empirics. For this, we propose a framework. The purpose is to encourage theoretical and empirical research on the types of knowledge management and paradoxes identified in the above review. Our goal is consistent with other scholarly calls for such models (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2013). There is, therefore, the need to develop more Africa-centered knowledge, management, and knowledge management rooted in the cultural context of Africa.

MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

The contextual characteristics of Africa

Africa is a duality of the modern and traditional (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2015). Drawing upon Zoogah et al. (2015), who discussed the dual contexts of Africa, which involves urban and rural contexts, we classify the studies of knowledge management and paradoxes (see Table 2) into

two types. Studies on the *modern context* deal with *autochthonous knowledge management (AKM),* the way autochthons (i.e., Africans) develop bodies of methods, tools, techniques, and values in their organizations to acquire, develop, measure, distribute, and provide a return on their epistemic outcomes. Even though African countries are not developed, they nonetheless possess unique knowledge systems, which were mostly destroyed and replaced during colonialism (Armah, 2018). The way Africans develop techniques and methods seems different from that observed in the West (Armah, 2018; Zoogah, 2019). Knowledge management studies that center on the economy focus primarily on the industrial economy, while those that focus on the financial aspect examine knowledge management in the banking institutions. Technology-centered knowledge management studies deal with global practices, while education-centered ones focus on western learning. Knowledge management related to electoral systems are political, while those that look at the legal domain focus on the courts. Studies that focus on the social aspects of knowledge management discuss interpersonal networks.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

In contrast, studies that focus on the *rural context* deal with *autochthonous management knowledge (AMK)*. This refers to the epistemic outcome that is independent of its imported origins, and that stands on its own in addressing local problems and in providing its own local training and scholarship. It focuses on leveraging the collective knowledge of Africa to enable African organizations to compete (Zoogah et al., 2015). Zoogah (2019) suggests that "through meaningful management knowledge African societies can be changed for the better" (p. 187), an echo of the Africa Academy of Management, which established a journal based on the belief that "sustained publication of rigorous, actionable, indigenous knowledge that first builds theory and empirically documents management and organizational issues and practices in Africa" (p. 189). Studies in this

category focus on the subsistence economy, communal finance, traditional practices, and learning as well as heritage systems, tribal councils, and family networks.

Dual Epistemes

Multiple levels characterize studies of episteme in Africa. First, Zoogah (2019) suggests that primary, secondary, tertiary, and quadruplex levels yield historical knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, critiqued knowledge, and transubstantiated knowledge, respectively. These forms of knowledge fit within the modern and rural dualism (Zoogah et al., 2015; Zoogah, 2019). The former tends to be dominated by Western episteme (theories, strategies, practices, and approaches), while the latter is dominated by traditional African episteme. As discussed above, the two contexts suggest two types of episteme - AKM and AMK, respectively.

Second, the dominant Western knowledge system co-exists with traditional African knowledge systems. While Western knowledge systems tend to prevail in the urban context, the less dominant or traditional African knowledge system prevails in the rural context. Western episteme is characterized by several universally established management principles, theories, models, and systems, recognized as "best practices" for the World. These are perceived as global best management practices, and they have served to assess and rank the quality of management in different countries (Bloom et al., 2012). The assumption is that the set of practices identified by the West offers a universal benchmark against which the quality of management in a given sector may be assessed.

The traditional episteme, defined as such because of its relatively lower density (i.e., lower

contribution to the global scientific enterprise), is unknown mainly because of the disinclination of the West to tolerate other knowledge systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Scholars aligned with the subordinate episteme are increasingly advocating not only tolerance but also acceptance of their epistemes because of the role of knowledge systems in ontological experiences (Segalo, 2016). The subordination of the African episteme to the dominant Western episteme is "legitimated" through the view that the latter emerged from advanced scientific methods available only in modern Western countries. Imposed on African countries (and other regions) through colonial influence and power, industrialization and international trade, Western management knowledge is generally viewed as a measure of development and progress and applied as "best-practice".

The diffusion and application of Western "best practices" across the globe seems to suggest a convergence of management knowledge. However, research consistently points to national differences triggering a reassessment of the role that different political, institutional, economic, cultural, historical, and traditional systems play in creating diversity across organizations and countries (Claver-Cortés et al., 2018). Such diversity creates tension between converging and diverging dynamics, whereby the simple acceptance of "universal solutions" is challenged by the complexities and peculiarities of different local contexts (Hussinki et al., 2017). At first sight, globalization might be seen as a convergent force of management knowledge originating from the "West". However, *divergence* occurs as this knowledge is modified, extended, or even replaced by local indigenous management knowledge that takes into account inevitable contextual singularity.

From a paradox perspective the contributions of Western and African knowledge, even when opposite, can be combined fruitfully as a duality in much the same way that urban and rural knowledge systems function in Africa today. In other words, even though they might oppose one another, this tension can be a source of creativity, discovery, and mutual appreciation.

Tensions

The increasing contentions of both epistemes as relevant, meaningful, and legitimate leads to tensions. Tensions are states resulting from the perception of opposition between relevant factors (Putnam et al., 2016). Organizational tensions with paradoxical potential, i.e. tensions resulting from mutually-defining persistent contradictions, in Africa, may involve the need to develop short-term flexibility while preparing organizations for the long run (Sarala, Cooper, Junni, and Tarba, 2014), combine foreign management practice with local culture (Gomes et al., 2014; Perrin et al., 2007), offer standardized products or adapt them to local markets (Ang and Massingham, 2007), share knowledge by traditional or technological means (Kruger and Johnson, 2010), and deal with the contradictions of a colonial legacy in a post-colonial (and anti-colonial) era (Nkomo, 2011). Zoogah (2019) identifies four tensions associated with knowledge generation and management that span the levels of discourse: fused, allied, dependent, and independent. The tensions "vary in degree from weak (tensionless) to strong (very intractable tension)" (p. 199).

One tension of major significance for the West is that of differentiation or domination. Differentiation refers to the strategic response of distinguishing the dominant episteme from the subordinate episteme (Huff, 2007). It calls for recognizing the subordinate episteme as relevant and imbuing it with legitimacy (Zoogah, Zoogah and Dalaba-Roohi, 2015). It presupposes equal

39

standing with regard to knowledge generation and utility. Domination, the process by which the superior episteme asserts authority over the subordinate episteme, neither recognizes the latter nor regards it as relevant. Instead, the subordinate episteme is viewed as inferior and unworthy of consideration regardless of the limited knowledge of agents of the dominant episteme about the subordinate knowledge system.

The development of African episteme is essential for the development of more contextualized management knowledge. It is crucial because the development of management knowledge at a global scale demands an understanding of the nuances and uniqueness of the African context. Specific sociocultural, institutional, and economic factors prevalent in Africa present paradoxical challenges not identified in Western contexts and, hence, require a combination of foreign management knowledge and practices with the local realities. Since most of the existing management knowledge has been developed from a dominant Western perspective, such theories may need to be revised, modified, and extended when taking the African reality into account. Though Africa is very culturally, ethnically, politically, and economically diverse, Sub-Saharan Africa is generally characterized by a traditional maatian philosophy, which influences social interactions including those occurring in the context of management and organization (Karenga, 2004). Several management scholars have indicated that the lack of knowledge about the local African context (Jackson, 2012; Kamoche et al., 2004) has led foreign managers to make decisions resulting in conflict and frustration at various levels (Anakwe, 2002; Nwankwo, 2012). As asserted by Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2018, pp. 556), in the case of Africa "there remains a need for the development of indigenous concepts and issues to explain the effects of institution-based factors." Therefore, developing management knowledge that takes into account Western scientific and

traditional African epistemes becomes essential.

Identification

The tensions we discussed above influence not only identification and representation in the global environment, but also define the ontology of the people of the respective zones. By ontology, we mean the being of those people characterized by the existence of absolute reality. Historical and contemporary evidence suggests that the being of Africans is not optimal. Indeed, Fanon (1972) suggests that people of the global north who are in the zone of being contrasts with those of the global south in general and Africans specifically who are in the zone of non-being (i.e., their lives are not that significant or meaningful). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) suggests that this ontological experience leads to a "confused sense of self, a crisis of consciousness, and a crisis of identity" (p. xii). Zoogah (2017) refers to this state as "identity capture".

Management studies show that the cognitions, affect, and behavior of individuals determine their individual and collective identity. Fleetwood (2005) suggests that "the way we think the world is (ontology), influences what we think can be known about it (epistemology); how we think it can be investigated (methodology and research techniques); the kinds of theories we believe can be constructed about it; and the political and policy stances we are prepared to take" (p. 197). In other words, the knowledge of individuals and their groups are linked to their ontology. It also influences the connections they establish (i.e., what they identify with). Identification has been studied for over 50 years in social psychological and organizational studies. Tajfel (1978) defines identification as the self-awareness of one's membership in a group, as well as the emotional and evaluative significance of this membership. In this paper, identification refers to the sense of

connection that members of the subordinate episteme feel about their episteme. To the extent that they identify with their episteme, they might be perceived as deprived and unlikely to develop, because knowledge deprivation diminishes the effectiveness of socio-economic transactions. People from the zone of the dominant episteme, on the other hand, are likely to perceive knowledge gratification, which enhances their transactions.

Representation refers to the agency of the subaltern in the sphere of knowledge. As Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers (2008) indicate, "schooling is organized around a representational epistemology: one which holds that knowledge is an accurate representation of something that is separate from knowledge itself" (p. 213). They add that "'knowledge' and 'reality' should not be understood as separate systems which somehow have to be brought into alignment with each other, but that they are part of the same emerging complex system which is never fully 'present' in any (discrete) moment in time" (p. 213). Representation here refers to how difference is framed in the sense of both *representation as depiction* and *representation as speaking* for (Nkomo, 2011, p. 366). It is, therefore, associated with knowledge or epistemology. The lack of that representation is "epistemicide," understood as the destruction of different knowledge systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). In other words, the poor depiction of Africa and the inability of Africans to speak suggests that their representation is inadequate. If representation is a form of contribution, then the inability of Africans to contribute knowledge suggests that their representation in the global episteme is limited. It also negatively affects the growth of Africa.

The debate about what is vital for the growth of Africa has revolved around knowledge creation. While some scholars suggest adopting Western knowledge and practices because of its domination

and diffusion (Briggs and Sharp, 2004), others advocate for African knowledge because the learning curve seems shorter given the familiarity of scholars with African phenomena (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Furthermore, it is argued that in addition to the epistemicide associated with Western episteme (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016), adopting Western knowledge deprives scholars of a meaningful identity. A scholar studying social phenomena in Europe thus becomes a European expert in that social phenomena. Similarly, an African scholar studying political phenomena in Africa not only becomes an African expert in that political phenomenon but can generate insight that transforms the political sphere.

As Zoogah (2019) points out, there are various ways by which African scholars can develop identity from African phenomena. The dominant paradigm, Afrocentricity (which refers to the philosophical and theoretical construct in the discipline of African Studies where laws, generalizations, methodologies, and theories are created) (Asante, 1988), has psychological (cognitive, affective, conative, behavioral); structural, and functional elements that can elucidate the African peoples' realities. The Afrocentricity paradigm can be used to study social phenomena, the social constructions that influence the psychological, structural, and functional interactions of individuals', groups', and societies' development; economic phenomena that focus on the individual and collective choice distributions that determine productive activities within national and global spheres (Hicks, 1939), and technology, the body of knowledge devoted to creating tools, processing actions, and extracting materials (Child, 1987). In that regard, Afrocentricity seems to be a trigger for strategic research approaches.

Strategic Approach

39

Research in strategic behavior suggests that identification or representation may result from several strategic approaches (Oliver, 1991). A strategic approach refers to the fundamental direction to achieve an outcome or objective. Outcomes can be achieved using balanced (duality) or unbalanced (dualism) approaches. An unbalanced approach (dualism) refers to the use of either a local (African) or foreign (Western) epistemic approach. In their review of the management literature, Zoogah and Nkomo (2012) found that all the studies applied Western theories. Even in the area of qualitative studies, where constructionism is based on the subjective interpretations of the local context, scholars resorted to Western interpretations. Other reviews on Western/Eastern epistemes (Li, 2016) found similar effects. In other words, most scholars from Africa tend to prefer Western paradigms – or at least to use them because of the academic norms that force authors to frame their work theoretically. A balanced approach (duality), on the other hand, refers to the use of both local (African) and foreign (Western) epistemic approaches, combining the Afrocentric and Western paradigms. This approach seems promising because scholars doing this leverage strengths of both worlds. However, they are also affected by the weaknesses of both paradigms. The reality, however, is that African scholars rarely use a balanced approach. As depicted in Figure 1, both balanced and unbalanced approaches influence AKM and AMK.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Autochthonous Knowledge Management (AKM)

The modern context of Africa is associated with knowledge originating in the colonial state (Zoogah et al., 2015). Lewis (1954) argued that developing countries are characterized by an advanced sector (usually associated with manufacturing and urbanization). The effectiveness of modern organizations depends on modern knowledge management spanning multiple institutional

39

levels (Zoogah et al., 2015). The generation and facilitation of knowledge that builds an efficient industrial economy underpins industrial academies (e.g., Association of Ghana Industries). Banking systems that supplant traditional financial mechanisms require modern knowledge systems because of the global interconnection of financial institutions. The hyper-competition of modern organizations suggests that technological practices that enable advantages are diffused to the urban sector, especially from the West.

In addition, organizations and ministries of African countries are dominated by technocrats who leverage Western knowledge acquired through affiliated educational systems. Knowledge management related to effective governance and legal systems underpin organizations in the urban context. For example, diffused property rights, which are based on western practices, enable not only domestic but also foreign companies to operate within African countries. Lastly, the modern context is characterized by interpersonal non-familial networking knowledge that supposedly supports organizational processes and operations. This seems different from AMK, as discussed below.

Autochthonous Management Knowledge (AMK)

There have been calls for autochthonous management research or indigenous management research in general (Holtbrügge, 2013) and specifically in Africa (Cunha et al., 2016; Gomes et al., 2011, 2016; Jackson, 2013; Nkomo and Zoogah, 2013), Latin America (Cuervo-Cazurra, 2008; Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2017), and Asia (Leung, 2012; Li, 2014, 2016). The motivation is to enable autochthons to join the scholarly conversation (Huff, 1998; 2008). Jackson (2013) systematically re-examines the concepts of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge by drawing on "a range of

disciplines and what these concepts mean to undertake management research that more thoroughly reflect global realities while evaluating indigenous research methods that could be used effectively and appropriately in this endeavor" (p. 13). Even though his objective is to "lay the foundations for mainstreaming indigenous research within international and cross-cultural management studies, taking sub-Saharan Africa as the primary and initial focus, and using the informal economy as an example" (Jackson, 2013, p. 13), the problem is that the informal economy is a contextual mechanism. It suggests that the formal economy is bereft of indigenous knowledge. Nonetheless, Jackson (2013) indicates that the concept of indigenous knowledge refers to insider knowledge or "a knowledge of the 'local' by local people 'who know what will and will not work'" (p. 25). Situating indigeneity within the informal economy is a static view. However, Jackson (2013) points out that "a dynamic concept integrates indigenous management knowledge into the wider global discourse and practice of international management" (p. 25).

Given the negative political, historical, and geopolitical connotations of the term "indigenous" (Jackson, 2013), the concept of autochthon seems a better alternative. An autochthon is a native and therefore refers to Africans and their way of not only understanding, discussing, assimilating, and appreciating knowledge, but also sharing that knowledge in a way that affirms their ontology and episteme. Zoogah et al., (2015, p. 10) define autochthonous research within management as "management research that is independent of its imported origins, and which stands on its own in addressing local problems and in providing its own local training and scholarship." They argue that autochthonous management researchers are driven by a desire to generate theoretical and practical knowledge to solve *local* management problems, in the actual *local* circumstances, responding to *local* specificities and needs. Consequently, they called for autochthonous research

that focuses on the "development of (1) management techniques for practice in the public and private sectors (e.g., dynamic innovation) as well as (2) management theories that fit the informal and formal economies."

Outcomes

Outcomes of AMK and AKM cut across levels – individual, organizational, and societal (Zoogah et al., 2015). In this paper, however, we focus on the last two. We begin with organizational outcomes because the purpose of African management is to enhance organizational effectiveness (Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012; Zoogah et al., 2015).

Organizational level. The literature shows that organizational effectiveness is multidimensional and manifested in various perspectives (Cameron and Whetten, 1983). Zoogah et al. (2015) develop a typology of organizational outcomes based on the interconnectedness of dual economies, the variety of African economic systems, and the diversity of the African management thought system (Ahiauzu, 1986). The outcomes are either contextual (internal and external) and or temporal (short term and long term) dimensions of organizational effectiveness. The contextual dimension addresses the external and internal environments of organizations. Thus, some outcomes focus on internal constituents (e.g., profitability, which enables wage increases for employees) while others are external (e.g., customer satisfaction). Still, some outcomes are short term (sales), while others are long term (societal transformation). Collectively, they depend on autochthonous knowledge.

The production of business knowledge is also likely to affect impactful business venturing. A

voluminous literature exists on strategy, international business, and entrepreneurship linking knowledge production to business success. Psychological, economic, and organizational knowledge related to individual employees, managers, and executives influences not only the practices but also the operational and strategic outcomes of businesses. In the West, such knowledge influences business venturing, management, and growth.

Several agencies, countries, and supranational entities (UN, UNDP, ILO, World Bank) suggest that business is important for growth and development in Africa (United Nations, 2008). The sustainability literature also shows that African countries cannot nurture economic sustainability without effective businesses (Maathai, 2009). For example, the literature on Africapitalism, referring to the private sector's commitment to the socio-economic development of the continent, is an idea proposed and championed by Tony O. Elumelu (in Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). It suggests that business operations should be consistent with African socio-economic and cultural standards (Finestone and Snyman, 2005). It requires efficient economic coordination by diverse actors, such as the state, civil society, and markets, which suggests drawing from actors' moral psychology (moral agents) and projecting human behaviors and needs of individuals in African societies (Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). To the extent that business is conducted consistently with the stipulations of Africapitalism, it is likely to influence the flourishing of African societies.

The effect of these outcomes is to increase innovation and productivity. In response to various calls for testing and contextualizing established international business theories in Africa (and elsewhere) (Teagarden, Von Glinow, and Mellahi, 2017), Gomes et al. (2018) investigated the effect of productivity on African firms' exports. These authors tested the applicability of the widely

accepted self-selection theory, which suggests that more productive firms export more (Melitz and

Otoviano, 2008). Their findings show that this widely accepted self-selection theory is not

applicable in high corruption contexts, where invisible barriers impair the capacity of African

SMEs to compete in international markets. Their results show that while in low corruption

environments it is more important to understand "the rules of the market" (competitiveness

determined by productivity and efficiency), in high corruption contexts firms must also understand

the "rules of the game", and effectively use alternative networking mechanisms to "open the doors"

of international markets (Gomes et al., 2018).

Societal level. Production of business knowledge may also directly influence the flourishing of

African societies. Business knowledge helps to increase organizational and industry productivity,

which enhances economic wellbeing. Decades of research in the management and organization

fields highlight business factors that influence the productivity of individuals, groups, and

organizations. Even though the industrial base in Africa is limited, such knowledge can be

leveraged to maximize economic operations in this sector (Sallinger, 2001). Furthermore, national

policies derived from scientific business knowledge support organizations and industries by

cultivating environments that maximize productivity (Eifert, Gelb, and Ramachandran, 2005).

Such knowledge contributes to national development (Bloom et al., 2012), and to the extent that it

is highly impactful, it can help transform societies (Zoogah et al., 2015).

This might occur through economic mathesis, the science of order associated with empirical forms

of business theory and knowledge. Economic mathesis creates two orders: one of knowledge and

one of dependence. The order of knowledge is cognitive while the order of dependence is

behavioral. The former refers to cognitive orientation of society emanating from scientific evidence showing how relational structures join and function. It describes relationships not only in society but also in businesses or organizations. The order of dependence refers to structure of dependency deriving from behavioral orientation toward valid and reliable scientific evidence. For business, it centers on the extent to which firms can rely on empirical knowledge to generate valuable outcomes.

Economic mathesis is likely to impact business venturing through the orders of knowledge and dependence. Business needs practical and theoretical knowledge as well as scientifically valid and reliable knowledge that shows how productive they are likely to be in leading the market. Evidence-based management is based on this (Rousseau, 2006). Businesses also need knowledge they can depend on continuously (Rousseau, 2006). For example, empirical evidence on effective internationalization is likely to be meaningful for African multinational corporations interested in penetrating markets in developed countries.

The orders of knowledge and dependence are not limited to business; they are vital for the flourishing of Africa. Africa's progress arguably depends on scientific knowledge and the degree of dependence on that knowledge. Knowledge that is not meaningful is unlikely to influence the functioning of society, just as it cannot influence entities' dependence on that knowledge. Both meaningful and dependable knowledge are likely to affect economic, political, social, and even cultural interactions and result in societal uplift.

The primary effect of all these is epistemic equity and societal transformation. Epistemic equity

refers to the realignment of knowledge systems in a way not to subordinate African episteme. Otherwise termed epistemic adjustment, it focuses on knowledge generation that optimizes the scientific contribution of African scholarship (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Zoogah, 2019). Societal transformation, the degree to which a society is changed, especially in a positive way (Bell, 1973), is a function of knowledge (Stehr, 2007). We argue that the transformation of African societies depends first on the degree to which the knowledge generated by African scholarship rises to the level of scholarship in developed societies, and second on the degree to which organizations are productive and innovative. The latter collectively contributes to industrial productivity. The societal outcomes are likely to be achieved when the profile of African episteme is boosted through autochthonous management. In his Presidential Address to the Africa Academy of Management, Zoogah (2019: 186) noted that "as a parrhesiatic organization, AFAM has to engage in value-creating practices through its discourses so that it can endow Africans with the right and ability to speak. These value-creating practices are means by which AFAM moves beyond its sacredness to the secular context of Africa. Unlike other scholarly communities, AFAM does not have the luxury of not 'unliving' the African challenge; it has a sacred duty to help provide a different and new living to Africans than the one they are currently experiencing."

DISCUSSION

Management in Africa may benefit from an integration of local and Western epistemes via the creation of autochthonous management knowledge, joining Western and local elements paradoxically, providing it with roots (local groundedness) and wings (global resources to "fly"), to use Tigharsi et al.'s (2020) metaphor, like opposites that can coexist with vibrancy without negating one another. This can constitute an exercise in synergy and trade-off, in which

professional management embraces local contingencies (see Table 3) without neutralizing advantages from global knowledge (Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2020). We argued that this is a much-needed exercise, given the fact that contexts pose unique challenges to managers and organizations, meaning that good practice depends on proper contextualization. In our interpretation, autochthonous management knowledge does not negate the importance of universalistic attempts to define good management, but neither does it discount the power of context. In this sense, African management should not necessarily reject Western management knowledge outright, but should synthesize it with local specificities. Inspired by the literature on paradoxes related to organizational tensions and contradictions, we see this effort of integration as potentially fruitful (Gaim et al., 2018), as new knowledge can be created without rendering any of the poles subaltern. In fact, what defines a paradoxical view of organizations and management is the fact that it accepts that different – even opposite – visions and perspectives can coexist and that this coexistence can be a form of vitality and discovery rather than one of dissonance.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

AMK and AKM are important for Africa because they contribute to science. At the moment the contribution of Africa to scientific enterprise is limited because of the paradox of knowledge. It is replete with and urgently needs knowledge to escape its current socio-economic deprivation. Yet, the knowledge that it generates is foreign and partly irrelevant. For future research, the autochthonous perspective can contribute to paradox theory by revealing specific paradoxes and the local conditions of their production. Paradox theory has rapidly converged toward four types of paradoxes (Smith and Lewis, 2011) and has been criticized for this convergence (Cunha and Putnam, 2019). Research on the African contexts can open new tensions in organizations in

39

defying existing categorizations, helping to reframe Westernized views of paradox (for example, with regard to traditional and rational forms of authority). The role of family and community, tradition, and solidarity, may encourage the revision of the current state of the art on paradox as suggested by preliminary, qualitative research (Cunha et al., 2016). Equally promising may be the search for a synthesis of Western and African epistemes that transcends the poles, creating new forms of theorizing that express a genuinely autochthonous ethos.

Implications for practice and policy

Managers are often interested in knowledge, especially best practices that enhance their operations. Management knowledge focuses on the accumulation of such best practices. We suggested two types of best practices associated with AMK and AKM. The distinction enables managers to determine the appropriate type of knowledge management. Furthermore, the paradoxes identified are mechanisms that enable managers in African organizations to complexify their knowledge systems to gain sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Zoogah, 2019) without sacrificing global or local knowledge. Demands on African managers may have specificities differing from those on other continents, and we offered a map to raise awareness regarding paradoxes that may be more appropriate in the African context. Instead of transferring "best practice" without contextual consideration, we suggest that local and emergent competing demands need to incorporate contextual nuances. In other words, the paradoxical tensions characteristic of Africa may be considered as integral to business and policy rather than as local expressions to be solved through international "best practice". Lastly, the strategic approaches we propose will enable managers to formulate their strategic directions with regard to knowledge management.

39

CONCLUSION

Management in Africa may benefit from an integration of local and Western epistemes via the development of paradox-conscious autochthonous management knowledge, integrating Western and local elements through paradox: opposites that can coexist without neutralizing one another. This effort of synthesis unites professional management with local contingencies in a way that is fruitful because it takes into account the importance of general professional knowledge as containing universalistic trends. We identified some tensions around KM that managers in Africa will have to appraise.

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Table 1. The Paradoxes of Autochthonous Management in Africa

Paradox	Domain	Meaning	Dimension	Source
Ingenuity Paradox	Industrial	African countries are the sources or origin of ingenuity but they are the less innovative in the world	Decision-making	Loftus (2005), Hart (2000)
Resources Paradox	Industrial	Africa has abundant resources but it has the greatest level of poverty in the world	Resources	Maathai (2011); Sachs and Warner (2001)
Capital flight Paradox	Industrial	Africa is supposed to be a capital-starved region but it is a capital exporter.	Resources	Asiedu, Francois and Nti-Addae (2012)
Management Paradox	Industrial	Management is increasingly being demanded to transform African countries but the conditions for effective and professional management are being eroded.	Capacity	Zoogah (2019)
Knowledge Paradox	Industrial	African countries are the origin of knowledge and literacy but they are the least knowledgeable in the world	Scientific	Armah (2018)
Policy Paradox	Political	African countries need to develop policies that contribute to societal transformation but the policies they develop constrain productivity.	Planning	Ayuk and Marouani (2007)
Chieftaincy Paradox	Political	African countries viewed traditional chiefs as bottlenecks to democracy at the time of independence but use them for political and democratic governance	Governance	Baldwin (2016)
Reform Paradox	Political	African countries adopted structural adjustment reforms but deteriorated until they achieved stability.	Change	Hutchful (2002)
Aid Paradox	Social	Aid is supposed to enhance welfare of African countries but instead exacerbates it, increasing dependency.	Support structure	Moss, Pettersson, and Van de Walle (2006)
Restoration Paradox	Social	African countries have the greatest need of restoration but they have the greatest brain-drain.	Leadership	Skinner (1999); Vieira and Alden (2011)
Wellbeing Paradox	Social	African countries are the originators of the integrated being but they are the most splintered and vacuous in the world	Identity	Zoogah (2019)
Paradox of Erudition	Scholarship	Africans need to be different or unique in erudition, but they focus on assimilative episteme.	Epistemology	Nkomo (2011)

Table 2. Contextual Characteristics of Africa

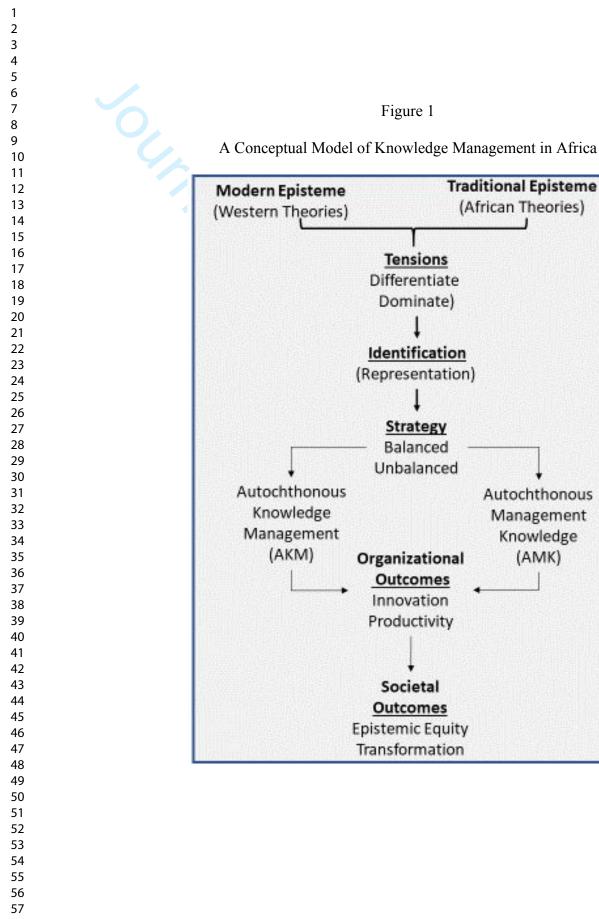| Characteristics	African Context	
	Modern	**Traditional**
Sector	Urban	Rural
Proportion	30-40%	60 - 70%
Knowledge Management	Autochthonous Knowledge Management (AKM)	Autochthonous Management Knowledge (AMK)
Economic	Industrial economy	Subsistence economy
Finance	Banking institutions	Communal finance
Technology	Global practices	Traditional practices
Education	Western learning	Traditional learning
Political	Electoral systems	Heritage systems
Legal	Courts	Tribal councils
Social	Interpersonal networks	Tribe and family networks

Table 3. Contrasting global and autochthonous knowledge

	Global knowledge	**Autochthonous knowledge**
Definition	Global knowledge refers to epistemic outcome that has universal relevance because the phenomena of interest are not limited to a particular context.	Autochthonous knowledge refers to epistemic outcome that is independent of its imported origins, and which stands on its own in addressing local problems and in providing its own local training and scholarship.
Focus	Universal context	Local context
Goals	Solves university scholarship and practical problems	Solve local management scholarship and practical problems
Contributions	The utility, relevance, and application of the knowledge is boundary-less.	The utility, relevance, and application of the knowledge is bounded.
Limitations	Uncertainty of its relevance	Generalizability
Representative work	Williamson (2008); Riley (1994); Neal (2008); Smith (2002)	Zoogah, Zoogah, and Dalaba-Roohi, (2015); Jackson, (2013); Amaeshi, Jackson, and Yevuz, (2008); Mangaliso (2001); Mangaliso and Lewis (2013).
Example	*Corporate governance*, the system by which corporations are directed and controlled	*Ubuntu*, a distinctly African concept that has philosophical and management implications for research and practice

39

Figure 1

A Conceptual Model of Knowledge Management in Africa