"African Management": Concept, Content and Usability

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Abstract

Purpose – While management research in the African context is not very visible in the extant management literature, there is a piecemeal corpus of literature that has arisen in response to the exclusion and marginalisation of Africa in the broad field of management scholarship. The idea underlying this reasoning is that the Western management model prevailing so far in Africa is inadequate because of cultural considerations. However, what is meant by "African management" still remains unfamiliar to both researchers and practitioners, both in Africa and outside.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors conduct a selective review of the fragmented "African management" literature to identify its direction. The paper questions how "African management" research scattered in the literature can be consolidated in a single comprehensive frame.

Findings – The paper identifies the key elements underlying the "African management" narrative. It also articulates these elements within a frame which represents an unprecedented attempt to render advocacy of "African management" more insightful and useful in global management scholarship.

Originality/value – The vibrant economic trends of Africa and its forthcoming dynamics are on the spotlight. At the same time, this upturn raises again a central concern about African societies' development in which organizations are expected to play a pivotal role. Yet the paucity and fragmented nature of the current state of African management research do not enable either practitioners or academia to get a deep understanding of African organizations. This article constitutes a major contribution by identifying the analytical parameters that really count in African organizations.

Keywords African management, African Thought,

Paper type General review

Introduction

From the analysis of all the most informed observers, Africa is experiencing unprecedented growth period. Some trends testify to changes experienced on the continent. For example, the recently published Ibrahim Index (2014) points out that the institutional governance of fifty-four African countries has improved continuously since the 2000s. *McKinsey Global Institute* (MGI) meanwhile expects a doubling of macroeconomic indicators of Africa's development and urge international companies to take a look at the opportunities in the continent (MGI, 2010). Walsh (2015) indicates that in the recent years, Africa as a whole has even surpassed the rest of the world in terms of economic growth. For example, between 2004 and 2013, African countries (including 52 out of the 54) had achieved a growth rate of 4.99%. Africa is now seen for its potential wealth in terms business opportunities (MGI, 2010; *McKinsey & Company*, 2012; Chironga et al., 2011; *The Economist*, 2011, 2013; *The Independent*, 2013; Walsh, 2015). Major players in the media industry have even developed programs relaying the economic and entrepreneurial dynamics of Africa. This is the case for *Bloomberg* with a programme like *Africa Business Weekly* or *CNN* with *Inside Africa*.

Carmody (2011) somewhat nuances this enthusiasm indicating that if this economic context is favorable for the whole of Africa, it specifically benefit Sub-Saharan Africa[1] which is more engage in a changing global economy. A recent study published by the *Wall Street Journal* shows that among the top ten African economies attracting the attention of 200 European and American multinationals, nine are in the sub-Saharan part of the continent (*Wall Street Journal*, 2014). If this economic dynamic which aims to contribute to the economic takeoff of African countries is extensively studied through the prism of a variety of disciplines (sociology, history, anthropology, politics, etc.), organizations which are the real economic engines are still the subject of highly rare and fragmentary studies in management (e.g., Kamdem, 2000; Nkomo, 2011; Wren and Bedelian, 2009; Zoogah et al, 2015a). However, as Nkomo (2011) stresses that the quality of knowledge of African management is essential to the development of most African countries. Accordingly, following Kamdem (2000), we consider that it is necessary to build a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the management of African organizations.

This paper contributes to the literature on "African management" by providing a critical review of its fundamental constituents and the links they may have. Indeed, considering that companies have a major societal role to play in transforming African states, the theoretical

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[1] In this article Africa will designate sub-Saharan Africa.

and managerial implications of our study contribute to a better understanding of how African organizations function.

Our study also contributes to a wider debate in which authors like Boyacigiller and Adler (1991) invite our management researchers to study management systems outside the most prevalent models. In particular, Walsh (2015) argues that researchers have poor knowledge about the management African organizations. This article is an attempt to feel this gap by examining the basic components of the "African management" (e.g., Hatchuel, 2005). We intend to produce the elements of accessibility to action models that govern the functioning of African organizations. Such objective has a threefold reason that justifies its urgency (Theimann et al., 2006). First, African managers think they have sacrificed their authenticity in managing African organizations through an unsuccessful adoption of Western ideals. Second, the absence of African systems of thought in the international literature in management is increasingly criticized. Finally, owing to the growth of international business and globalization, there is awareness that Africa could be the world growth driver whose domestic markets are fairly constrained.

This cognizance then revives a debate in favor of the recognition of an "African management" from which, for instance, has emerged the idea of an African capitalism called "africapitalism" advocated by the Nigerian banker, economist and philanthropist, Tony O. Elumelu (Amaeshi, 2013a, b; Elumelu, 2015; Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). Thus, as the reference to the " African management 'is increasingly evoked by managers and academics, it is timely to contribute to its promotion by identifying what it refers to, examining its dynamics in order to disentangle its main concepts and narratives.

Our article is structured as follows. First, we position management research on African organizations as compared to the generic analytical perspectives of organizations. Thereafter, we define a framework used as guideline to examine the *usability* of "African management". We present our results that show that how "African management" emerges as an act of resistance to the dominant literature in management. The African system of thought is mobilized as a means of (re) appropriation of African authenticity. However, the difficulty to unravel "African management" is that it is inherently subject to multiple influences. Despite this difficulty, "African management", although being spread in a piecemeal fashion, reveals two forms of actionability which give it the ability to be put into practice. Finally, we discuss the implications of our results in terms of research methodology, public policy and management education systems.

Overview on organizations' analysis and African management issues

Reviewing the organization involves the distinction of its main features (Kamdem, 2000). The organization is singularised by the institutionalization of the division of labor, power and communication responsibilities. It is also marked by the presence of decision centers exercising a function of control and guidance upon the activities of its members. Finally, the organization is characterized by the mobility of its members. This mobility is itself a function of organizational objectives and individual skills of its members. These three characteristics of the organization determine its objects of analysis.

Figure 1 traces the evolution of the central objects of the analysis of the organization according to five different investigation perspectives. From its rationalist and functionalist to humanist and culturalist conceptions, the organization has gradually become both a material and symbolic object. The former analysis suggests the organization have failed to consider the human aspects in a productive system. The organization is then gradually perceived as an object that is not only material but above all symbolic.

These generic analysis perspective of the organization structure suggest that the management research on African organizations emerged belatedly in comparison with international research (e.g., Kamdem, 2000; Nizet and Pichault, 2007; Oghojofor et al., 2012). In particular, on the one hand the rationalist and functionalist perspectives and on the other hand humanist and culturalist feed the bulk of management research on African organizations. (Kamdem, 2000).

Figure 1 : Generic perspective of the analysis of the organization

Rationalist and functionalist	Neo-rationalist and reformist	Organist and systemic	Actionalist and strategic	Humanist and culturalist
Mainstream • Analysis of blue-collar work at the workshop • Analysis of manager's administrative work • Analysis of administrative bureaucracy	*Mainstream* • Analysis of decision-making • Descriptive analysis of the manager's work	*Mainstream* • Systemic analysis of the organization • Socio-technical analysis of the organization	*Mainstream* • Analysis of social movements • Strategic analysis of power	*Mainstream* • Analysis of human relations at the workplace • Intercultural analysis of the organization • Analysis of organizational culture • Psychodynamic Analysis of the organization
Central Object The formalization as an essential process of the organization. This involves the valuation of the technical nature of the	*Central Object* The characterization of the decision and the central role of the manager in this process	*Central Object* The determination of the relationship between on the one hand the organization and its environment and on the	*Central Object* The design of the organization as determined by issues of power and the actors' game of power. The	*Central Object* The recognition of the relativity and complexity of Human at the workplace. Therefore, the

work organization and the identification of key organizational functions

other hand, the organization and the Human

organization is also seen as a reflection of the society

organization can be understood by the emotional and affective traits of its members.

Gradual consideration of a social dimension to the materialistic design of the organization
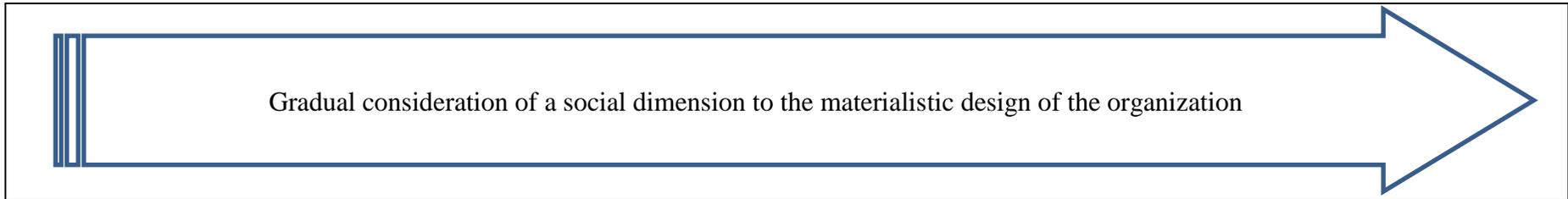
Source : Based on Kamdem (2000)

Within the first perspective, it is the assessment of the instrumentation of the administrative bureaucracy that attracts the attention of researchers. The studies conclude that the administrative bureaucracy resulted in a dysfunctional organizational system in Africa. The failure of African organizations overwhelmingly pointed out in the literature emphasizes the needs of identification of the success or failure factors of African economies.

It is in this context that the second perspective - humanist and culturalist - is mobilized aiming at taking into account cultural considerations within African organizational environment. This second perspective takes three main directions depending on how culture is integrated in the analysis (Kamdem, 2000). First, African culture has been regarded as a key factor in the failure of African organizations. This in turn would explain the delay of African economies (Easterly and Levine, 1997). This ethnocentric reasoning is justified by the idea that due to an "economy of affection" (e.g., Hyden, 2006), characterizing Africa, which opposes to a productivist economy, African culture should deserve greater account (Kamdem, 2000). Second, a more reflective approach enabled a renewal of the way to take into account African culture in the analysis of African organizations. It is now considered that there is no need for African culture to adapt to the African administrative bureaucracy. Rather, managers have to understand what Africa has as the most dynamic is its culture. A third response to the failure of African organizations is to seek a paradigm that can help understand and integrate African cultural traits. Unlike the first two perspectives, this third response is attempting to understand the conjunction modalities of African traditions and Western modernity in the formation of an African productive economy (e.g., Bourgoin, 1980, D'Iribarne, 2003; Henry, 1991; Kamdem, 1996; Mutabazi, 2006).

It therefore appears a strong desire to defend a distinctive identity in "African management". But this attempt is fraught with difficulties including one that deserves to be highlighted. (e. g., Kamdem, 2000 ; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012). Indeed, it is important to note that almost all of the small proportion of studies focusing on African organizations is mainly subject to a Western prism of organizational analysis. In fact, most of current knowledge on the management of African organizations is centered on the theoretical corpus test that by definition obscures the very identity of the "African management". Kamdem (2000) concludes that the loosely conceptualization of the organization as an object of study may be questioned. In line with Kamdem's (2000), we contend that the "African management" as an object of study is still poorly conceptualized. There is therefore a need to build a framework to better understand the main components of the "African management" (e.g., Jackson, 2013 ; Walsh, 2015 ; Zoogah et al. 2015a).

Setting the framework of the analysis

Hatchuel (2005) discusses the usefulness of management research in general and revives debate on how researchers and managers access management knowledge. This reflection also makes sense in the case of African management which is still largely confined in Africa and strongly dependent on the English-language production originating mainly from South Africa (e.g., Ahiauzu, 1986; Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Choudhury, 1986; Jackson, 2011, 2012, 2013; Jones, 1896; Nkomo, 2011; Nzelibe, 1986 ; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012)[2]. Therefore, the so-called African management is not very diffuse for it is mainly published in journals and / or books with a limited audience and an access difficulty. It is true that since the 90s, African management research gets an international attention (Zoogah et al., 2015a). But that is also where another problem lies: that of the poor accessibility of African academic institutions to international research resources. Hence, it is the question of how African management literature can be mobilized and valued in academic circles as well as in African organizations.

We contribute to this debate by borrowing, from the information science literature, the concept of usability (Koohang, 2009) to examine the contribution of research on African management to the understanding on how African organizations function. The usability refers to the ability of a system to effectively meet the needs of individuals. Indeed, it may be difficult for managers to understand the notion of African management what may encompass. Hence, it is important to elucidate the African management in terms of its currency, relevance (organizational and personal relevance) and actionability (e. g., Bailey and Clarke, 2000, 2001).

In other words, the usability of African management can be attained under the three following conditions. First, African management must contain knowledge that can be connected to what really matters to organizational processes (currency). Second, it must be linked to organizational values and individual objectives and interests (organizational and personal relevance). Third, the African management knowledge must be actionable in the sense that the managers can to put it into practice in their decision-making process (e. g., Bailey and Clarke, 2000). Hereafter, we detail each of those three conditions.

The currency refers to a knowledge portfolio intended to face major organizational issues such as strategy, business processes, change management and performance (e.g., Gray and Meister, 2004, 2006; Hansen and Von Oetinger, 2001 ; Rulke et al., 2000). Thus, the currency

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[2] Actually, the top-five most prolific African nations in economics and business research are respectively South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tunisia (Nkomo, 2015).

of African management should allow a new understanding or at least a better understanding of these four critical organizational issues. In other words, managers must be able to refer to African management as important enough for analyzing organizational situations.

In terms of relevance, African management must reflect individuals' decision-making accuracy within their organizations (e. g., Hernes, 2014; Jaworski, 2011, Rich, 1977, 1997). This means that managers must be able to take advantage in using knowledge claimed in African management literature. From this point of view, managers' motivation is key to grasping the fundamental managerial activities including generation, communication and exploitation of knowledge. The use of African management in the conduct of these three activities demonstrates its relevance. Therefore, African management attains certain relevance when one can demonstrate the interest it arouses among managers. Beyond its organizational and societal benefits, African management must also allow managers to derive personal benefits. In this case, African management will allow managers' efficiency in achieving their goals.

The relevance is achieved when the managers in all his/her managerial activities can glimpse the improvement of his / her efficiency through the use African management knowledge. The managers may not perceive such an individual benefit unless he/she manages to clearly identify the contents of this African management. In other words, the managers must perceive African Management as part of a set of actions available to him / her in connection with the performance of his managerial activities. The debate on the African management may appear somewhat enigmatic if it is not in line with managerial practices within African organizations. Examining the relevance of African management thus entails the understanding of how knowledge that emerges from the African management literature addresses the problems encountered by African organizations. For Hernes (2014), discussing the relevance of management research is to admit that managerial work is localized, embedded, and function of time.

Finally, the actionable character of African management refers to the idea that managers can use it when they face some opportunities in exercising their managerial activities (McGahan, 2007; Pearce and Huang, 2012). Actionable means here that the knowledge generated through the African management literature can be converted into usable ideas. The actionability of African management does not mean that academic knowledge should be more pragmatic. However, the actionability of knowledge depends greatly on its execution conditions (e.g., Hatchuel, 2005). Bailey and Clarke (2000), for isnstance, propose to consider knowledge as a set of usable ideas. Their suggestion requires a distinction between data,

information and knowledge. Data becomes information only when put in context. The information in turn becomes knowledge when it is of interest to a potential user at a given point in time. This implies that to be actionable, African management must be practical given the actual capabilities of the managers.

According to Pearce and Huang (2012) management research can be actionable in three ways. Management research can be symbolically actionable if it purports to legitimize managers' bias or preferred actions. It can also be instrumentally actionable when research results are used to solve a specific practical problem. This form of actionability reflects the idea that management research influences managers' actions. Finally, management research can help managers to have a conceptual understanding of a management phenomenon. This latter form of use of management knowledge has not produced an immediate application in managers' course of actions. For Pearce and Huang (2012) the instrumental and conceptual usage of management research render it the most actionable.

From this framework, we analyze the articles dealing with "African management". Thus, our study contributes by presenting a systematic review of management research on African organizations (e.g., Nkomo, 2011; Zoogah, 2008; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012). Our study is although complementary to existing contributions, but differs widely. Indeed, previous studies offer a critical review of management studies focusing on the African context. In particular, Nkomo (2011) highlights the tensions and contradictions of this literature. Zoogha (2008), Zoogah and Nkomo (2012) analyze the trend of management research on African organizations. For us, we present a critical review of the concept of "African management' 'in the management literature.

On the currency of "African management": What really counts?

"African management" is part of a general reasoning having a dual objective: emancipation and resistance to domination of the Western world through western managerial precepts. Jackson (2014) emphasizes that "control " and " resistance " form a central duality in African management literature. African management thus reflects a resistance posture which is at the heart of an issue of power between the dominant and the dominated (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978/1995; Spivak, 1988) in which the dominated must develop analytical frameworks helping them to take a stand.

Resistance to the extant dominant management literature

The claim of an African management is not an isolated phenomenon in the management literature. We situate this quest in a general context of questioning the Universalist pretensions of the Western management precepts. This general context that reflects a kind of desire for emancipation has resulted in a stream of research called "Global South" (Alcadipani et al., 2012). The term "Global South" refers to the idea that current knowledge on the management of organizations of the southern countries - developing or emerging countries - are largely produced with the lenses of western premises.

Better still; the knowledge that emerges from southern countries seems to be ignored by the proponents of Western perspectives. Some pioneering studies had already pointed this form of marginalization (e.g., Blunt, 1986; Blunt and Jones, 1997; Dia, 1996; Kiggundu, 1991; Nzelibe, 1986). Thus, under the banner - "Global South", the authors severely criticize the hegemony of Western perspectives in management research (Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012). The "Global South" in this respect represents a form of resistance to the dominant Western literature in management. It is the opportunity to propose how the ways of all the southern countries, the dominated, may partake in creating knowledge on southern organizations.

While "Global South" is aiming at reaching a form of authenticity in management knowledge about Southern organizations, there is at the same time a recognition of the convertible nature of Western management assumptions. Hernandez (2007) thus advocates that the management is by nature an adaptive object. This is consistent with the idea that the organization itself is a social object of perpetual transformations at structures, procedures and individuals levels (Kamdem, 2000).

Within this general context, African management is at the crossroads of three major intellectual postures that feed a wider debate on intercultural questions in management (Anakwe, 2002; Horwitz et al., 2002; Jackson et al., 2013; Kamoche et al. 2012; Theimann et al., 2006). A first perspective, contending a convergence, argues that the economic ideology leads cultural values so that Western management methods will result, ultimately, in the adoption of Western values by Africans. In contrast to this convergence viewpoint, a second thesis advocates a divergence. It is considered that culture is deeply rooted in a context and that it promotes values beyond a mere economic ideology. Accordingly, management practices are culturally situated. Thus, the adoption of Western management practices by Africans will not be able to subjugate African values. The third posture rather claims a crossvergence. The crossvergence invites to consider the possibility of a mixture of values

when several cultures meet. Indeed, local culture influences the meaning, interpretation and implementation of Western management practices. At the same time, the confrontation of Western management to local culture helps the development of a hybridity in African management practices. (Sartorius, 2011; Ward et al., 1999).

Despite the differences between these three perspectives, they have in common an idea that a link between cultural characteristics and management of organizations does exist. Indeed, a sense of common identity among actors within organizations can manifest through their agreements on several topics related to the management of organizations (Theimann et al., 2006). This may be the current state of the attributes of managing organizations. It may also be the question of what can be considered ideal in terms of management style or organizational factors such as hierarchy, decision-making and control. Finally, it may be how management situations considered ideal change over time.

Three ideal types of organizational management in Africa can be identified (Jackson, 2002; 2004; Jackson et al., 2013). We distinguish between the postcolonial management systems focused primarily on control, post-instrument systems centered upon individuals and results and the African renaissance systems focused on stakeholders. The postcolonial management is a legacy of colonization (Claeyé and Jackson, 2012; Jackson, 2012; Joy and Poonamallee, 2013; Nkomo, 2011). This first management style is based on a fundamental assumption of mistrust towards human nature. This induces a need to impose control within organizations. This management style unfortunately inhibits the creative capacity of organizations. It is a style of management that recognizes employees have a restricted skill set primarily rewarded in a pecuniary manner. This postcolonial management cannot be focused on results but be influenced by the logic of bureaucratic control mechanisms.

The second management style, the post-instrumental, is the result of the mission of African development that western actors have set themselves (Jackson, 2002). Western actors consider that Africa could look like the Western developed countries by adopting management methods imported through their multinationals and their development agencies. Importing Western management precepts also involves the training of African actual and future managers under Western leadership.

The third type of management acts as a rejection of Western ideals contained in the first two management ideal types (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; McFarlin, 1999; Nzelibe, 1986; Walumbwa et al., 2011; West, 2006). It is the ultimate form of expression of the desire for emancipation and resistance to domination contained in the first two ideal types. The African renaissance management style puts more emphasis on commitment towards stakeholders and

adopts an humanistic logic. It purports to reconnect African cultural principles which are basically communal to the functioning of organizations. Indeed, as Ntuli (2002) mentions, the logic underlying the African renaissance is that of a reappropriation of culture (s), religion (s), and African values in the research on Africa's development.

African thought-system as mean of resistance

Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) show that the strength of pre-colonial African institutions continues to shape the functioning of African organizations. African renaissance research connect with this perspective. This suggests that the current research on the management of African organizations seems to have mistaken the investigation focus. This then involves a better understanding of the African system of thought in order to scrutinize the relationship between African values and the functioning of African organizations. (e.g., Ahiauzu, 1986; Nkomo, 2011; Nzelibe, 1986). Indeed, unlike the Western system of thought, the African thought conceives life as a cycle (Ntuli, 2002). In this African thought, the world is an interconnected reality composed of human beings, plants and animals in which the survival of each entity depends on how all entities interact. In African societies, the beginning and the end of life are connected to a world of myths. These myths take shape through rituals. Rituals are effective through acts of worship (dances, sculptures, etc.) that mark the milestones of life: birth, initiation, marriage, death. This African thought is based on complementarity between the individual and the community to ensure the place of the human in the grand scheme of things.

What also determines the difference between Western thinking and African thought is based on the principles underlying learning styles and knowledge development (Theimann et al., 2006). While Western principles are based on a scholastic approach, in Africa they are based on a humanistic approach. The scholastic approach addresses the knowledge in two essential ways that maintain conflicting reports. Knowledge is the result of a factual understanding of objects like logic, science, etc. Yet, it can also be the result of a metaphysical questioning of the nature of reality. The humanistic approach based modes of learning and knowledge development in African societies is itself rooted in the rituals, history, cultural practices, symbolism and myths. This principle considers the human being as the starting point for any human action. It is based on a fundamental premise which states that human beings have themselves the capacity for truth and good. It is the reappropriation of that

human being that represents the main aim of the African Renaissance based management proponents. (e.g., Ntuli, 2002).

The system of thought is shaped in culture (Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Chen, 2014; Grzeda and Assogbavi, 1999; Nzelibe, 1986; Walumbwa et al., 2011) and culture is built outside of the organization (Kamdem, 2000). Nevertheless, organisational members are both individuals from the workplace but also individuals outside the organization (Theimann et al., 2006). Therefore, the question is how to ensure that the workplace integrates external elements which profoundly distinguish individuals. Actually, the African system of thought reflects a communal sociability (Kamdem, 2000). This sociability has an essential feature which is that of being both intra and inter-communal, and the family is identified as the fundamental socializing unit (e.g. Ntuli, 2002; Kamdem, 2000). The family is the basic unit of a clan. A clan is a unit of the nation. The communal sociability takes shape through these units and is structured around the four points (Ntuli, 2002).

First, a central place is given to the interrelationships and interdependencies between the human, nature, the spiritual entities and ancestors. Then the family as the basic unit of society is assigned a role of preserving life. The family as an institution is involved in all important milestones of human life to ensure that during times of crises, conflict resolution takes place as harmoniously as possible. The family provides a form of mentoring to its members. Finally, the communal sociability is based on two cohesion and harmony institutions. One is related to secret societies - the secret is particularly valued in African societies. And the other is based on the councils of elders[3].

Diversity is another characteristic element of culture in Africa. The ethnicity constitutes an important dimension (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2015; Nyambegera, 2002). Africa societies are by essence multicultural where ethnicity is an essential source of sociological attachment. The Sub-Saharan Africa has in fact more than 500 ethnic groups who speak more than 1000 languages and dialects (Kamoche, 2002; Seriki et al., 2010). Ethnic group serves as basic reference for self-identification. In this context, ethnicity can be understood as the use and mobilization of the identity or ethnic difference to take advantage of situations of competition, conflict and cooperation. If the ethnic group is just a cultural trait by which individuals are identified and identify themselves, ethnicity is a instrumentation of belonging to an ethnic group that may positively or negatively affect managerial practices (Kamoche,

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[3] Mutabazi (2007) describes the experience of the implementation of this type of council of elders in a subsidiary of a multinational based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. This institution is so important that Seny Kan (2013) proposes to integrate it as a coordinating governance mechanism both at national and organizational level in the African contexts.

2002; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2015; Nyambegera, 2002; Seriki et al., 2010). The salience of ethnicity as a central element of diversity in Africa imposes inclusive managerial practices (Nyambegera, 2002) and especially as the ceaseless socio-political changes question the justice and accountability in African organizations (Beugré, 2002).

"African management" is the object of ideological postures of which ideal types of management style can be distinguished. The African system of thought is purposely mobilized in the literature on African management as an essential tool for an emancipation and a resistance attitude. This African thought system is based on a communal sociability and an ethnic identification. In short, the challenge of the debate on the African management lies in examining the conciliation conditions of productive efficiency of organizations and the managerial implication of African system of thought (Kamdem, 2000). In this perspective, what is driving the African management research through the African Renaissance aims to build the foundations of the relationship between the individual outside the organization - in its cultural cement - and the individual at the workplace.

Objectives and Interests at stake

The management of African organizations is under a diverse influence that generates conflicting dynamics. Therefore, the inclusion of societal values is presented as a way to balance the productive goals of organizations and the preservation of the communal harmony of African societies.

Conflicting global-local dynamics

The global-local dynamics constitutes a major issue in the African management because management in African countries is subject to a variety of external and internal influences: multinationals, development agencies and local companies (Mitiku and Wallace, 1999). The rush of emerging countries in Africa reinforces the external influences (Horwitz, 2012; Jackson, 2012; Jackson et al., 2013). The development of the African management is thus at the crossroads of a variety of influences which can be a source of great emulations or otherwise real challenges. The challenges are, among others, related to the improvement of the organization's strategy, organizational processes, change management and performance (e.g., Mitiku and Wallace, 1999; Nizet and Pichaut, 2007; Zoogah et al., 2015a).

In general, current research suggests that the "global-local "conflicting dynamics are due to the lack of incorporation of African cultural values into African organization analysis. For Mutabazi (2008) this creates misunderstandings within African organizations on issues such as time management; retribution; relationship to the others; the organizational environment and the uncertainty. The mismatch between Western management models and african cultural traits is often pointed out. The socio-cultural traits often considered common to African societies are structured around social links and the perception of the role of individuals in society (Muchiri, 2011). Social ties are woven within groups structured according to the family and ethnic affinities. Under these conditions, an individual perceives its role as that of looking after the interests of the group he belongs to.

Furthermore, the perception of an individual is under the influence of the other members of his / her group of his / her ability to protect them. The relationship to the groups maintains personal sacrifices values to the benefit of members of the groups. This results in paternalistic management systems oriented patrimonial behavior characterized by ad hoc organizational arrangements and hence by irregular arrangements (Hernandez, 2000, 2007). Ces systèmes de management peuvent conduire à une concentration de l'autorité décisionnelle. Les acteurs développant ainsi des espaces discrétionnaires qui peuvent remettre en cause les règles et procédures organisationnelles. Social ties and the place of the individual within these links determine the accumulation of social capital by actors (Khayesi and George, 2011) and practices and actions (Nkomo and Kriek, 2011).

Aligning and balancing the stakes

For Muchiri (2011) the success of African organizations is related to an alignment of their systems, styles and practices to their local cultural contexts. This effort has resulted in several African management models such as the paternalistic model (Hernandez, 2000, 2007), circulatory model (Mutabazi, 2006, 2007) and the participatory model (Prinsloo 2000).

Because of social ties and the relationship to others mentioned above, Hernandez (2000, 2007) proposes an African management model based on social relations. This model is based on the idea that the production function is not limited only to the commonly admitted factors: "labor" and "capital." A third factor called "C" (for Cooperation, Community, and Collaboration) must be considered. In this model it is the accumulation of this "C" factor that helps to align and balance the Western productive goals of organizations and social cohesion

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in African societies. A company is no longer a mere nexus of contracts but a real social community. In this way, social community existing outside the organization is incorporated into the workplace (Hernandez, 2000; Prinsloo, 2000).

For Mutabazi (2006, 2007) beyond the diversity that characterises African societies, common cultural traits forming a coherent system of beliefs, values and sociability rules can be foundIn particular, rooted in parenthood, social ties are the subject of four types of circulation between and within community which form the Mutabzi's circulatory model. First, thanks to the social ties based on principles of solidarity and mutual assistance, the flow of goods takes place through a dynamic of "gifts" / "counter-giftsAll members of a group should contribute to these exchanges by right and duty. Thus, the circulation of individuals is determined by their ability to networking. Second, the vast network of solidarity that emerges encourages the pooling of resources which is the vector of the flow of human energy. Third, there is the circulation of power based on age. Age gives indeed the legitimacy of exercising power. But the legitimacy of an "elder" can be challenged if he / she does not contribute ethically to other forms of circulation. Fourth, information flows within and between groups with the ultimate aim of ensuring that people's behavior is consistent with three other circulations.

Claims and thoughts into action

Two forms of actionability seem to emerge from the current state of the literature on African management. On the one hand, we distinguish a conceptual actionability whose purpose is to demonstrate the indigeneity of the management of African organizations. Indeed, the identification of typical traits of the African management facilitates the resistance narrative to the dominant management models. On the other hand, some of the distinctive features of African management are subject to an instrumental actionability whose purpose is to solve particular managerial problems.

Conceptual actionability: re-writing and re-interpreting prior knowledge

The re-writing and re-interpretation of the knowledge on African organization management requires the identification the key concepts of the African management. Yet the indigeneity African organizations and the distinctive nature of the "African management" remain elusive due to a lack of convincing conceptualization (Jackson, 2013). There is no way to go around

this problem. The solution lies on designation identifying key concepts and / or characteristic elements of the "African management".

The concept of "*Ubuntu*" appears to be the most visible Afrocentric concept the literature on "African Management". (Prinsloo, 2000; Seny Kan, and Apitsa, 2014; Karsten and Illa, 2005; Lutz, 2009; Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi, 1997; Mbigi and Maree, 1995; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; West, 2014). The "*Ubuntu*" is an expression in the Bantu language of South Africa that reflects the communal nature of African countries. This concept is a boundary marker that helps distinguish African societies - less individualistic and more communal from Western societies - more individualistic and less communal. Thus the "*Ubuntu*" crystallizes the idea of a communal perspective of the company (Lutz, 2009). From an analytical point of view, "Ubuntu" is built on the distinctive features of African communal societies including ethics, interdependence, the human spirit and totality (Prinsloo 2000). Although the concept is widespread in the literature on "African management" it may be questioned on several points (West, 2014).

First, the concept is poorly documented empirically. Consequently, the generalization of the concept to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa may be unfounded. Second, all its distinctive elements are not unique to African societies. Third, the "Ubuntu" is presented with a form of idealism that exposes only the positive aspects of African social norms (e.g., Chen, 2014; Kragh, 2012). Despite its shortcomings, the concept of 'Ubuntu' still allows better investigation of the social nature of managerial practices in African organizations. (e.g., Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Chen, 2014; Khan and Ackers, 2004).

The re-writing and re-interpretation of knowledge on African management is also carry out by means of the development of theoretical models. For example, McFarlin et al. (1999) proposes in the context of South Africa a model of Africanization of the management of South African organizations. For these authors the Africanization allows the attainment of four organizational purposes: great equity among employees; high productivity; strong loyalty; and better organizational citizenship. Kamoche and Harvey (2006) re-examine the issue of knowledge transfer within multinational's African subsidiaries. They suggest an afrocentric model of the success of knowledge transfer. Zoogah et al. (2015a) for their part propose a model explaining the effectiveness of African organizations. Grzeda and Assogbavi (1999) discuss the cultural dimensions that influence the productivity of African organizations. Other studies emphasize the political dimension and the local institutional context of the development of the African Management (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2010; Horwitz et al., 2002). Finally, the re-interpretation of knowledge on African management highlights

the hybridity that African organizations are subjected (Jackson et al., 2013; Kamoche, 2011; Nkomo, 2011).

Instrumental actionability: tackling specific African managerial issues

The most commmon form of usability in the literature on African management is the conceptual actionability. However, instrumental actionability is increasingly carries out providing empirical based knowledge on the characteristic elements of the "African management". For instance, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) highlight several factors that explain the persistence of ethnicity, the characteristic element of the diversity of African societies.

Each ethnic group is often a specific linguistic group. This strengthens intra-group relations while limiting the inter-group communication. Individuals share the risk more easily within an ethnic group than between ethnic groups. Fragmentation and ethnic identity are compounded by income differences between ethnic groups and the opposition on the national political scene. Finally, the colonial history of Africa has strengthened and / or even creates ethnic identities. For these reasons, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) come to the conclusion that ethnicity is a key factor to consider in the analysis of the performance of African organizations. In this same vein, Rivera-Santos et al. (2015) show that social entrepreneurship and the choice of the social mission activities are determined by ethnic considerations. Diversity does not only have positive aspects, however, its negative aspects can be channeled in a positive way in the organization (Seriki et al., 2013). Nkomo and Kriek (2011) even show that promoting diversity helps managers to deal with organizational related issues such as change management.

Due to various influences, management of African organizations is the subject of hybridity of different forms. The hybridity in African organizations may be due to the influence of companies from emerging market investing in Africa (Horwitz, 2012). Some studies emphasize the dynamic of the hybridization within African organizations (Anakwe, 2002; Claeyé and Jackson, 2012; Jackson et al., 2008; Kamoche and Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Price and van der Walt, 2013; Sartorius, 2011). The dynamic of the hybridization is experienced within multinationals (Kamoche and Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Sartorius, 2011) as well as in SMEs (Jackson et al., 2008) or in NGOs (Claeyé and Jackson, 2012). Newenham-Kahindi (2009) also shows that hybridization does not emerge only from the North-South relationship, but also from South-South relations, particularly among African

countries. The empirical evidence of hybridization of management practices in African organizations seems to confirm the crossvergence thesis.

The argument of the African renaissance, that is to say the reappropriation of African values in the organizational environment is also the subject of an instrumental actionability. In particular, Bolden and Kirk (2009) show that Africans have an inclusive and participatory conception of leadership based on communal principles. This is an example of a study that shows how to integrate African values into organizational practices. West (2006) also shows how the African renaissance can help to address the incompatibility between Western mangement models and African values. Wanasika et al. (2011) empirically demonstrate that managerial implications the Afrocentric concept "*Ubuntu*" are common to different African countries (i.e., Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa).

Discussion and conclusion: "African management", between unfulfilled attempt and upcoming challenges

The appearance of the concept of "African management" in management research marks a greater willingness than a simple opposition to the dominant management research tradition. Beyond the idea of resisting what was previously legitimized as a universal management knowledge (Nkomo, 2015), the "African management" aims to reveal the denied identity of the management of African organizations. This study thus shows that the discourse on "African management" is not a mere re-examination of the issue of contextualization of management research in the African context. It is more about the development of an African management theory of African organizations, that is to say, a theory about the context (e.g., Bamberger, 2008) participating in a generation Afrocentric knowledge of African organizations (Holtbrügge, 2013 ; Lutz, 2009). This attempt, laudable as it is, remains unfulfilled because the academic production on the "African management" is not sufficiently abundant to form a coherent body of knowledge (e.g., Nkomo, 2015). Nevertheless, the review we have carried through our analytical framework based on the usability of the "African management" contributes to the literature on several points (e.g., Bailey and Clarke, 2000, 2001 ; Koohang, 2009; Pearce and Huang, 2012).

The management research on African organizations is part of three major intellectual postures: convergence, divergence and crossvergence. The discourse on "African

management" seems to oppose to the convergence thesis of cultural values led through managerial activities and rather seems to oscillate between the thesis of the divergence and that of the crossvergence. Indeed, (re) reading African organizations through the prism of the African system of thought is to admit the situated and contextual nature of organizational process. In this sense the "African management" supports the view of the divergence and corresponds to the ideal type of the African renaissance management. Yet, Nkomo (2011) stresses that the African Renaissance contains itself the same contradictions and tensions reproached to the alleged dominant literature management. The "African management" is a form of rewriting of Africa. The paradox is that this resisting act perpetuates the binary oppositions and hierarchies it denounces. The "African management" somehow falls into the trap of essentialism it tries to correct.

Impregnated with the logic of the African Renaissance, the "African management" is aiming at the understanding of organizational practices through the African system of thought. In practice, achieving this goal could be a little bit tricky for reasons similar to those already advanced in the general literature on management research in Africa (e.g., Hernandez and Kamdem, 2007 ; Nkomo, 2011, 2015 ; Safavi, 1981). Indeed, from a methodological point of view several criticisms can be put forward. In the current state of the literature, the "African management" is more the object of theoretical reflections than empirical studies. Moreover, it appears a homogenization tendency of values that characterize the African system of thought while Africa remains a culturally diverse continent (e.g., Kiggundu, 1991). For Nkomo (2011) there is an illusion of the cultural uniqueness in the rhetoric of the "African management" that does not encourage the discovery of the variety and complexity of management processes at work within African organizations. Several ways exist to capture this complexity. Bolden and Kirk (2009) points out that a better way to build an Afrocentric management knowledge on African organizations can be the use of a constructivist approach. For Walumbwa et al. (2011) a multidisciplinary approach combining historical, philosophical, economic and socio-political perspectives may be considered. Nkomo (2015) refers to such a notion of transdisciplinarity as "*decolonial approach*".

Another difficulty related to the resisting work underlying "African management" discourse is that of its conditions of emergence and dissemination. Indeed, the diffusion of academic knowledge quality is under the control of Western institutions (e.g., Nkomo, 2015). In reality the existing conditions the "African management" are highly dependent on dissemination tools of the scientific production of Western academics. It is as if the dominated cannot emancipate itself without the backing of the dominant. This could undermine the

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usability of the "African management" that we have exposed in this article. Indeed, the "African management" may appear as a mere publishing opportunity for academics much more concerned about their career progression than the examination the organizational issues faced by managers of African organizations.

Enhancing the usability of the "African management" while solving the aforementioned problems questions of wider discussions on the development of management education in Africa which actually is influenced by a multitude of public and private institutions, local and international (Kiggundu, 1991). Better yet, this multiple influence operates according to the areas of influence of the former colonizers (Hernandez and Kamdem, 2007). The challenge raised by this situation is related to the systemic nature of the solution to elaborate. Such a solution has to be designed in order to put management education systems at the service of the development of african countries (e.g., Abdulai, 2014 ; Nkomo, 2015).

This article supplements prior studies focusing on state of the art of management research on African organizations. (e.g., Zoogah et al., 2015a ; Zoogah and Nkomo, 2012). Here we develop a distinctive approach on the very notion of "African Management" This article adresses an obvious need to disentangle tools for understanding the "African management " as research object. The reflection we conduct helps define access conditions to the modes of action which govern the management of African organizations.

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