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INDIGENOUS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN AFRICA: A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND PRACTITIONERS

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Introduction: Indigenous Management Practices in Africa

Uchenna Uzo, Olamide Shittu and Abel Kinoti Meru

Introduction

Management is central to the success of every organisation. This underscores the importance given to management in academic and practice communities. Interestingly, most management books focus on Western principles and practices. Thus, these books are not mindful of the contextual nuances that shape management practices in other geographies. Lately, there have been calls for management philosophies and theories that reflect the peculiarities of the African continent (Iguisi, 2014; Inyang, 2008; Thomas, Michelle, Thomas, & Wilson, 2016). Thomas et al. (2016) rightly noted that most business schools in Africa teach management students with Western-influenced curricula and therefore omit some nuances that are found in African markets from their course modules. This is especially because the use of Western management models in Africa has not entirely yielded results that trigger economic growth and development (Iguisi, 2014, p. 61). Yet, Africa is fast becoming the investment destination of firms operating outside the continent. Indigenous management incorporates those management principles, theories and practices that ‘recognize and accommodate’ Africa’s ‘cultural, social, political and environmental factors’ (Inyang, 2008, p. 122) thus embodying Africa’s indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge in Africa is a widely researched area in literature. African indigenous knowledge has been explored in relation to other subjects such as sustainable development, ecological challenges and management, environmental conservation, power relations, rural society, communal resources management and traditional medicine (Magni, 2016; Msuya & Kideghosho, 2009; Mwangi, 1998; Pima, Maguzu, Bakengesa, Bomani, & Mkwiru, 2016; Selemani et al., 2012). However, little is known in the literature about the application of African indigenous knowledge to organisational management models in the continent. For instance, Lwoga, Ngulube, and Stilwell (2017) studied the indigenous knowledge

management practices in South Africa and Tanzania in order to ascertain how documenting indigenous knowledge using Myer's management model can help indigenous organisations in the countries and promote their activities. Likewise, Oghojafor, Alaneme, and Kuye (2013) researched the indigenous management thoughts, concepts and practices in Ndigbo (Igbo culture from Nigeria) and found out they are similar to Western management practices of human relations, team, motivation, management functions and decision-making.

Despite the few studies about the existence of indigenous knowledge and their comparison with Western models, Iguisi (2014) acknowledged that African values are to a large extent lacking in corporate management practices in the continent with most organisations practising Western management models. Iguisi (2014) showed that the application of Western management models in human management practices in Africa creates several challenges for managers in motivating their workers. In this light, this book is an attempt at bridging the gap in the literature on the status, prospects and challenges of applying African indigenous knowledge to management practices in the continent. Therefore, indigenous management would include social thoughts and practices that can be found in indigenous cultures on the continent which has been employed by African people to solve the socio-economic challenges they face in their societies. This knowledge is invaluable to the processes of the social organisation, human resource management, resource allocation and individual motivation to meet societal goals. What studies on indigenous management emphasise is the assemblage of this knowledge and their application to organisational management in order to make management practices reflect the values of the African people thus becoming more efficient.

Indigenous Management Practices in Africa: A Guide for Educators and Practitioners is a book by Africans for Africa that addresses this gap by bringing to the fore the contextual features of management practices in Africa. Succinctly, chapter contributors focus on how the African culture shapes the structures and operations of businesses and organisations in the five sub-regions in Africa (Central, East, North, West and Southern Africa). In addition to providing educators with a reference guide on indigenous management practices, the chapter contributors develop models that will assist managers and policymakers in implementing decisions that influence the way business is done in Africa. Furthermore, the book serves as a primer for management practitioners on how to conduct business on the continent. Thus, it is designed for scholars at business schools and practitioners seeking to understand indigenous African management practices. Members of the academic community within and outside Africa would be exposed to the principles and practices that are unique to the continent. This would enhance the design or better still the refinement of the management curricular in business schools on the continent. Also, practitioners would acquire requisite knowledge on ways of doing business on the continent.

This book is written by seasoned authors with diverse backgrounds in research, academics and practice in Africa. It addresses a wide range of topics on the various aspects of indigenous management practices in Africa. These include topics on

common features of African organisations; origins of these features; cultural elements that shape the ways of organising that are common to African businesses; and how management practices in Africa differ from Western models, among others. The authors draw their data from both primary and secondary sources, covering a range of issues that are representative of various regions of Africa. This was necessary in order to provide a holistic framework of practices common to people of Africa, despite their diverse culture. The book, therefore, offers the opportunity for learning about a wide range of indigenous management practices such as selling, purchase behaviour, financial management, organisational behaviour, leadership, entrepreneurship and business ethics.

The identification of these practices is a testament to the possibilities of applying indigenous knowledge to varieties of management practices in Africa. This book is particularly important to new companies looking to make a foray into the African market as they would be equipped with a reference guide on how to innovate new products and organisational practices that give customers and workers meanings and values beyond the products' utility and organisational activities. However, studying such indigenous practices would entail not only digging into literature to synthesise previous studies but also conducting empirical studies across the four regions of Africa in order to document current practices and variations within the continent. In this regard, the contributors to this book employed varieties of methods of data collection (both primary and secondary) through literature review, interviews, questionnaire distribution and case studies to capture the different aspects of indigenous management practices in Africa.

Structure of the Book and Summary of Chapters

This book comprises fourteen (14) chapters and each chapter addresses key management areas in the following manner:

- (1) Brief description (of the selected field of management);
- (2) Relevant indigenous management practices: their origin, cultural characteristics and unique differences from Western models;
- (3) Examples and anecdotal evidence of practices covering sub-regions of Africa;
- (4) Overall chapter framework or model;
- (5) Advice for managers and educators; and
- (6) Summary and conclusion.

In the chapter entitled 'Characteristics of the African Buyer's Purchase Behaviour', the authors examine the characteristics of African buyers' purchase behaviour. They discuss the common purchase patterns among African buyers while linking them to the socio-economic and cultural background of African societies. The authors further examine other factors that shape buyer's behaviour in Africa such as nature of households and technology. Other issues discussed in this

chapter include African buyer's purchase process and comparisons with non-African purchase behaviour. Practical examples are drawn from Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa to support the findings, and recommendations are suggested to aid teaching and practice of selling on the continent.

In the chapter entitled 'Common Indigenous Selling Practices in Africa', the authors explore indigenous selling practices that are common across the sub-regions of Africa. In doing this, the authors gathered primary data from western, eastern and southern Africa through field surveys, in-depth and key informant interviews, and observations while also sourcing secondary data from the relevant literature. The three indigenous selling practices identified in the study and discussed at length are street selling, haggling and credit-based selling. The authors further appraise the cultural values that influence selling in Africa and conclude with a model on the interrelationship of the identified indigenous selling practices in African markets.

Indigenous logistics and supply chain management practice in Africa are explored in the chapter entitled 'Indigenous Logistics and Supply Chain Management Practice in Africa' from a historical and contextual perspective. Present practices, their shortcomings and the available prospects are further explored through the presentation of anecdotal evidence of cultural and unique practices that represent indigenous logistics and supply chain management practices on the continent. Using a comparative analysis, the chapter examines the logistic performance indices of countries in the four regions of Africa. Challenges facing logistics management in Africa include corruption, poor infrastructure, the poor performance of land transportation structures and bureaucratic bottlenecks among others. On the other hand, African countries are boasting of new ports, transnational passageways and rails to improve logistics and supply chain management on the continent. The chapter closes with recommendations on how to improve logistics and supply chain processes in Africa.

The chapter entitled 'Indigenous Financial Management Practices in Africa: A Guide for Educators and Practitioners' answers the following questions: what are the indigenous financial management practices found in Africa? How do these practices differ from non-African models? What are the origin and cultural characteristics of African indigenous financial management practices? And how can these practices guide academics and managers in research and practice? These questions are answered by drawing secondary data from across the regions of Africa. Topics discussed in the chapter include finance theory, indigenous financial management, Hofstede's theory of cross-cultural difference in the international workplace, comparison of African and Western financial management models, and challenges and opportunities of indigenous financial management practices.

In discussing the indigenous human resource management and organisational behaviour practices in Africa, the chapter entitled 'Indigenous Human Resource Management Practices in Africa: Empirical Lessons from Four Sub-Regions' unpacks the conceptual discourse on indigenous people and their culturally influenced human resource practices. The authors note that such indigenous human

resource practices, when adopted by managers and policymakers, will see to the effective performance of employees in organisations in Africa. However, in the chapter entitled 'Indigenous Leadership Practices in Africa', the author explores issues around indigenous leadership practices in Africa. The author examines the various definitions and theories of leadership while also tracing the historical leadership crises in Africa. Taking a closer look at particular African countries, the chapter raises several questions on how African leadership identity can be recognised for the continent's socio-economic development.

In the chapter entitled 'Indigenous African Financing Strategies as a Unique Engine for Entrepreneurship Growth', the authors take an in-depth look at the case of indigenous angel financing and venture capital strategies in Nigeria as a case study for entrepreneurship growth in Africa. Also discussed are the financial capital strategies of indigenous African cultures, such as Ovimbundu of Angola, Kikuyu of Kenya, Dinka of Sudan and Xhosa of South Africa. Particular interest is paid to instances of angel investing and venture capital financing of start-up companies among the Yoruba and Igbo people of Nigeria. The authors further engage in the comparisons of Nigerian and Western angel investment financing models as they recommend ways in which these indigenous practices can be adopted. On the other hand, in the chapter entitled 'Strategic Management Practices in Africa', the author examined the strategic management practices that indigenous companies in Africa employ to compete on a global scale. In the chapter entitled 'Indigenous Family Business Management Practices in Africa', the author discusses indigenous family business management practices in Africa, their cultural background and difference with non-African modes in order to integrate the various debates about cultural influences and family business management practices in the continent. Aside from describing the history of family business in Africa, the author also identifies how key practices such as strategic processes, governance, human resource and succession planning play out on the African family business scene.

In the chapter entitled 'Ethical Principles and Practices in Africa', the authors take on the task of evaluating the ethical principles and practices in Africa. Employing different ethical cases, the authors inquire into the dimensions of ethics in management and how ethical principles are applied through the African viewpoint. Other issues examined in the chapter include the multicultural nature of African management, the community and character aspects of management ethics, and advocating a model for indigenous ethical management in contemporary Africa *inter alia*. In relation to this, in the chapter entitled 'Decision-Making Practices in Africa', the author then discusses decision-making practices in Africa. The author analyses the cultural and institutional factors that influence the decision-making attributes of business executives and managers covering the regions of Africa. Gathering empirical data from four regions in Africa, the author investigates the influence of culture, institutions, information paucity and environmental factors on business and management decision-making in the continent.

The chapter entitled 'Redesigning the Management Curricula for Africa' tackles the subject of redesigning the management curricular for Africa. The author probes

into Africa's colonial heritage and management practices while also highlighting indigenous philosophical thoughts on management and curriculum design. The author later suggests a framework for redesigning management studies on the continent. To conclude the book, in the chapter entitled 'Indigenous Management Practices in Africa', the authors outline the key recommendations in each chapter and raise pertinent questions on the next point of action for African management discourse, teaching and practice after documenting all the issues in the book. Suggestions are given about topics that could be incorporated into the management curricula on doing business in Africa.

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