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## **Endemic African Management Philosophy and Its Implication for Nigerian Organizations.**

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### **Abstract**

*The progression of the native African management philosophies and its effectuation in Black Africa has been grossly in remission and adulterated by Western management ideas. Management philosophies alien to Africa is generally unsuccessful in achieving determinable objectives for Africa as they undervalued African work beliefs and communal environment in management practices. This paper reviewed the management styles peculiar to Africa and Nigeria in particular with a view of ingraining an endemic African management philosophy and praxis as a more efficient model, founded on indigenous beliefs system, ethos and theories. The review appraised the proficiency of afro-management ideas in Nigeria for organisational stability.*

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**Keywords:** *Indigenous management philosophy, African management models, cultural values, management practices and thoughts, Human relation.*

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### **Introduction**

Scientific management theory and classical theories are the major management philosophies that shaped the various organisational and industrial practices in both developed and developing nations (Inyang, 2009). In this regard, the 19th century intrusion and the coming of the colonialists to Africa has disorganized the people's customs and valued mindset prompting the emergence of the colonized management praxis in Africa (Nzelibe, 2006). This intrusion portrayed people and systems in the continent as largely devoid of established administrative or managerial traditions. This led to the ascendancy of Western industrial, administrative organisational ideas and praxis, as the major determinant of material and economic progress. Thus, ideas from the scientific management permeated scholarly and administrative traditions among administrators, policy planners and academicians in sub-Saharan Africa. After years of struggle, there is a growing consensus that organisational goals and developmental outcome based on the scientific management ethos are strongly inundated by traditions and cultural mindsets in Africa, as it underscore the growth of human and material resources in Africa (Inyang, 2009). This is so not because of its inefficiency but largely due to the fact that scientific management goals ignored the local needs, desires and belief system. As such, the uncritical transfer to average nation like Nigeria has contributed to organisational inefficiency and low accomplishment (Ejiofor, 2005). In Africa, people,

community and traditions come first. As such organizations which do not address the needs; solidarity, motivations and co-existence of people have its goals largely undelivered and outcome distorted. In the light of these circumstances, the approach of this inquiry is to effect a conceptual clarification of indigenous organisational philosophy in Africa and identify the cultural values influencing management practices and thoughts. Further, this theoretical inquiry seeks a proper identification of traditional ethos and workplace behaviour that can shore up indigenous management ideas and praxis.

### **Conceptualization of Indigenous African Management Philosophy**

African indigenous management dates back millenary years before the emergence of the colonial regime (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013). With the evolvement of social structures rigorous socio-commercial interactions and as primitive nuclear families systems expand into ethnic groups and nations. The requirement for regulating complex relationships and activities shore up the multiplex forms of leadership that were introduced. An improved labour specialisation and supervisory traditions were documented among Sumerians (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013). Similarly, the Egyptians marshaled human capital and bond servants in building urban centres and gigantic edifices. The erection of one pyramid in the era of 5000 BC was completed by 100,000 laborers in a period of twenty years (Hassan, 2013). Essentially, planning, coordination, and supervision were managerial components in achieving these feats. Adeoti, George and Adegboye, (2013) laud these feats as a practical example of management and coordination with antiquated technology compared to modern standards, and these showcase the sophistication of ancient Egyptians management systems (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013).

Olusoji and Ogunkoya (2015) summarized management pattern in Africa as based on beliefs and traditions. It major philosophy emphasizes communalism; seeing the organisations as a universal brother hood. Underlining these traditions is patriarchy, hard work, clan-loyalty, team-work, integrity and reciprocity. These inform their business ethics and shared labour practices. In addition, family relations, co-prosperity or social mutual interest, reverence for old age and culture, harmonious unanimity, hero-worship and healthy rivalry. Africa management prepositions suggest a management style that shows great concerns for people, production and participatory decision-making (Hassan, 2013). Despite the existence of praiseworthy management attributes in the continent, management as practiced was regarded as crude and unscientific, informal, lacking sophistication and thus its relegation and the continuous derision (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013). Literature review on indigenous administrative in Africa particularly that of Nigeria shows a management traditions influenced by traditions, mores, values and mannerism and the “unprocessed” transmission of organisational ethos conceived in the western world led to their erosion, stagnation, and administrative challenges in the home grown organisational traditions (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013; Hassan, 2013; Olusoji & Ogunkoya, 2015).

### **Western-styled Practices and its implication for African Management Philosophy**

Colonialism has implication was believed to have arrested the economic progression of the continent. Colonialism took advantage of the diverse nature of Africa people in terms of being continental, multiracial and multi-religious. Colonialism promoted sensitivities to these differences, thus creating an impediment to the achievement of a common or unified local management ideas which transverse tribal and ethnic African organisations for example “winners takes all” compared to representative or consensus sharing formula (Duke, 2010). Secondly, contact between Africa and the west have occasioned a social intercourse shaped by decades of economic profiteering, grand suppression and forceful implementation of

scientific management that leaves behind in its wake acute problems of shaped by greed, profiteering and self-centeredness for the present managers in African (Duke, 2010). Scientific management ideas reduced the Afro-management ideas approaches through biased portrayal of leadership in the literature. For instance, extensive literature described and pictured African management leadership as essentially subservient to that of the west. The use of western benchmarks in the evaluation of corporate governance and control, leading to the idea that stunted growth or underdevelopment experienced in Africa is fundamentally due to poor governance and control, thus stringent application of western leadership and management models is the needed panacea to the problems of the continent.

The fourth issue is the entrenchment of inferiority complex and power distance by the local administrators who inherited the colonialist system of management. This practice demoralized the local populace, employees and those who inherited the administration after them. Under this situation, germinating African work ethics have become difficult, crossbreeding its ideas and its spread stagnated (Duke, 2010). Another, factor is the poor organisational performance of sub-Saharan organisations superintended with scientific management ideas as the local elites and handlers neglected indigenous, cultural and conditions in their administration (Iguisi, 2009). For example; Ahiauzu (1999) noted with certitude that the present organisational rewards system did not emanate from the communal work values but rather from colonialists' conceptualization of wage employment introduced in a way that early African workers found offensive, till date this negative attitude still persists among individuals in sub-Saharan Africa. As a response poor work related attitude is commonest in African organisations resulting in the derogatory label of the lazy African workers by expatriates.

Furthermore, African educational system rely greatly on the western sources and knowledge base for their educational design and theoretical directions (Oghojafor et. al., 2012). In Africa, academic faculties in the ivory towers and training centres still followed the colonial business, organisational and management theories directly or indirectly decades after independence. Course contents, models, literature, theories, etc of were majorly sourced from the western dominated knowledge realm and these have no contribution to the germination and growth of Afro-management ideas or praxis (Oghojafor et.al., 2012). Extreme academic disparagement in terms of academic operationalization, cultivation and demand for empiricism have reduced African management practices to budding stage. Western management thought, essentially was instrumental to the relegation and decimation of indigenous organisational arrangement and management practices (Duke, 2010).

### **African past and the emergence of Management ideas**

Documentary evidence about managerial practices in sub-Saharan Africa and precisely that of Nigeria is largely non-existent before the advent of the Europeans. Historians and archeologists relied on artifacts and oral traditions on the formation of African empires (Oghojafor, Idowu & George, 2012). Despite these, Africa's role in evolving management ideas and practices was rarely mentioned in scholarly works of Western intelligentsia, in realism historical landmarks and material evidence about kingdoms and empires in Africa with an inalienable proof that these dynasties could not have survived save for proper planning, coordination and regulation of human and material resources (Oghojafor, Idowu & George, 2012). Empirical look at history documented by western historians about the great empires like Shonghai, Bornu, Oyo, Benin and Mali among others shows a system administration in terms of standing armies, tribute collection and hierarchy of communication and authority prominent in today's management theories. The greatest proof is the immense pyramids of

Egypt, described as the outstanding demonstration of antiquated organisational effort. Dating back thousands of years, management functions of planning, organizing and controlling was evinced in construction of these great edifices looking at the amount of human and material resources deployed. The ancient Ghana Empire was also acknowledged for its efficient primitive communication and labour management efforts. In the Northern and Eastern African regions, great African civilizations survived; built urban centres, institutions of learning and trading centres outside scientific management theories dated lasting hundreds of years due to effective organisation of human and material resources propelled by African ethos (Adeoti, George & Adegboye, 2013; Olusoji & Ogunkoya, 2015). All in all, these ideas are culturally interwoven and seen in African mode of life in non-industrial or organisational settings. Common attributes of managerial competencies are found in the traditional leadership structures, organisations and socio-cultural engagement of tribes, villages and local agricultural practices with little or no interference from established state administrations (Oghojafor, Idowu & George, 2012). These examples include regulation of kingship, common agricultural land matters, building infrastructure at village level and age-grade organisations.

### **African Management Models**

Several African culture management models have emerged and are gaining prominence. Ubuntu was proposed by Mangaliso, (2001). Social obligation is based predominantly on kingship. Ubuntu have become a salient feature in South African management literature, another built on the belief that individual derives their identity from their recognition of others as themselves. Ubuntu principles are quite salient in management praxis as it promotes a more exceptional approach to managing organisations. This approach stimulates team spirit, individualized consideration, reciprocated respect and compassion between leadership and subordinates, and integrative decision-making (Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi, 2005). Fifteen management models by Eze (1995) as the pivot for evolving home grown African management principles for context such as Nigeria. George et al., (2012) also provided managerial philosophies such as; communal, patrimonial; balance; organo-african; clientilism management approaches and acclimatization ideas and praxes. Olusoji and Ogunkoya (2012) identified Social Principled Africa management tenets. These include; Deference to rank : respecting but simplifying power distance showing leadership as a source of humility and compassion towards the subordinate giving rise to the common maxim “respect must be reciprocated”. Inviolability of agreements: honoring obligations, and conforming to societal expectations. Garland for Consensus compromise: this involves recognizing individuals and management effort towards the maintenance of harmony within the social context arising from negotiating compromise and consensus. Inter-mutual Management Practice: Communitarity remains the centre piece of basic management philosophy. The management centres round building a community of people and avoiding spirit of selfish interest. Balance management: Balance management is a managerial approach of ensuring equanimity among all members in an institution by managers. Underlining this arrangement is opportunity for minority has equitable equal representation as the majority (Olusoji & Ogunkoya, 2015). Despite the beauty of these ideas, a consensus African management philosophy still remain elusive and its application evasive. Major issues affecting the development of African management philosophy include the cost of building a research for the Nigerian domain due to unavailable material and institutional support. Benefit for outstanding scholarly contributions are awarded or instituted, given recognition solely by foreign bodies and countries. These were responsible for selective promotion of western ideas by the African intelligentsias. Intellectual disagreement thanks to forces of change in African ivory towers due to differences in orientation, technically inhibit the production of consensus ideas and

orientation (Oghojafor et. al., 2012). Finally, the strangeness of African management ideas to western trained scholars affected its satisfactoriness, believability and connexion among the academia as management theories, failed to develop ideas for native content as most transmitted curricula originated from curricula and brochures of foreign to Africa (Oghojafor et. al., 2012).

### **Impact and implication of African management model to Nigerian organisations**

Afro-management principles have been trending in Nigeria. For example, Duke (2010) reported that the implementation of the “House system” an age long “patrimonial afro-management model” for agricultural production, later into the merchandising activities between the locals and European trading companies. The “House system” has endured till the present time even after decolonization, due to its strength and virility in managing human and material resources (Duke, 2010; Uwa, 2004). Hassan (2013) in an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of African management philosophy found that despite usefulness of the indigenous management strategies it did not motivate any change in the level of unethical practices among the management practitioners within the system. Oghojafor et al (2012) confirmed the contribution of paternalistic and consensus building ethos evolved into “the Federal Character principle” as means of bridling the challenges faced at independence in Nigerian civil service by giving opportunities and facilities to ethnic grouping. It ended that instilling these principle resulted in dearth of meritocracy, corruption and underdevelopment. These empirical evidence occasioned several implications for African management philosophy in Nigeria organisations. These include the problems of managing diversity showcased by a high degree of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity (Oghojafor, et al, 2012). These variations have created a tough path in having a commonly acceptable management ethos for an organisation (Oghojafor, et al (2012). Secondly, religious variations and struggle for political system affected the satisfactoriness of a selected culturally derived management theory. This divisiveness thanks to ethnic proclivity affects the consensual agreement of any home grown management theory as one ethnic group or religious orientation seeks to outdo each other. There is wide prevalence of abuse of organisational rules thanks to social proclivities (Oghojafor, et al, 2012). The institutions in African nations were evasive in concretizing any home grown management philosophy theory thanks to hasty expectations of private and public acquire benefit, profits and returns on investment such that helpful theories and applications are relegated. Furthermore, inconsistency in legislation affected the use of afro-management ideas as surrogate idea (Oghojafor, et. al, 2012). Despite these, Nigeria organisations in its activities and progression in implanting Afrocentric ideas instituted the following:

**Social and Industrial harmony:** there is always a concerted effort to maintain social industrial harmony through removal of offensive western organisational traditions. Thus, many stringent administrative ethos was replaced with African values. For example, referring to senior colleagues on first name basis is replaced with using culturally accepted appellations such as “My Oga” (My senior or Boss), use of job designation initials, GM for General Manager.

**Communitarian conscientiousness:** Major decision would have been discussed informally through informal meetings with important stake-holders and solution is often sourced from these meetings. For example, pay cut was accepted in lieu of out-right downsizing in some organizations, after workers suggested pay cut informally through their supervisors. Mandatory inclusion of minorities in management decision through consultation, compromise and conciliation. Instituted attendance for invitations and honoring employees’ child naming,

marriages, and funeral ceremonies as an informal way of strengthening the organisation as a community.

**Balancing diversity:** Managing differences in Nigerian organisations is all about equanimity of complex web of diversity. The major balancing is between ethnicity and religious orientation. Since this balancing cannot be achieved all at once due to limited spaces. Zoning and Zoning formulae is used to decide who get what and at what time.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper bring to fore a hiatus in management theory literature by exposing the African management ethics as cultural value that drive job related attitude and work praxis. The review of the African core values draw its data from assessments of the social attribute and values among the native system, priced traditions, human relations orientation and reposed cultural relationship. Also, this paper laid emphasis on the requirement to formalize these approaches into the African work environments. More significantly, there is a pressing drive to produce theories and approaches founded on the standards of African culture and business environment. Applications of afro-management approaches have varied outcomes. All in all, these propositions are important as they geared toward having an autochthonic African management model, an upstart towards developing management ideals with national and African-wide components, rather than organisational principles and practices of the Western interests.

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