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African and Chinese Managerial Practices: A Cross-Cultural Comparison
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Prácticas de gestión africanas y chinas: un estudio intercultural

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Résumé de l'article

Depuis quelques années, la Chine est devenue le partenaire économique le plus important de l'Afrique. Les entreprises chinoises de toutes tailles et de tous secteurs apportent des investissements, du savoir-faire managérial et un dynamisme entrepreneurial dans les 54 pays africains. La Chine accueille également des migrants africains à la recherche d'opportunités commerciales ainsi que des étudiants africains qui poursuivent leurs études dans les prestigieuses universités chinoises. Par conséquent, il serait utile de prendre connaissance des pratiques de gestion qui caractérisent aussi bien la Chine que l'Afrique. Grâce à une revue analytique, notre étude met en évidence les similitudes et les différences des philosophies de gestion, des styles de gestion, du réseautage et de l'entrepreneuriat entre la Chine et l'Afrique. Cette recherche contribue à renforcer les connaissances sur la dynamique des pratiques de gestion des organisations sino-africaines et à mettre en lumière les pratiques de gestion susceptibles de garantir le succès des entreprises chinoises en Afrique.

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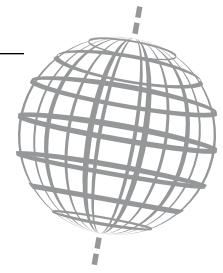
Pratiques managériales africaines et chinoises : une étude transculturelle

Prácticas de gestión africanas y chinas: un estudio intercultural

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, China has become Africa's most important economic partner. Chinese companies of all sizes and sectors bring investments, managerial know-how and entrepreneurial energy to all 54 African countries. China also plays host to the largest population of African migrants seeking business opportunities as well as African students in search of renowned universities. It is therefore useful to compare management practices between China and Africa. Through an analytical review, our study highlights the similarities and differences of management philosophies, managerial styles, networking, and entrepreneurship. This study helps strengthen knowledge of Chinese and African management styles and suggests directions for future studies that could ensure the success of the collaboration between China and Africa.

Keywords: African management, Chinese management, managerial practices, entrepreneurship, networking

RÉSUMÉ

Depuis quelques années, la Chine est devenue le partenaire économique le plus important de l'Afrique. Les entreprises chinoises de toutes tailles et de tous secteurs apportent des investissements, du savoir-faire managérial et un dynamisme entrepreneurial dans les 54 pays africains. La Chine accueille également des migrants africains à la recherche d'opportunités commerciales ainsi que des étudiants africains qui poursuivent leurs études dans les prestigieuses universités chinoises. Par conséquent, il serait utile de prendre connaissance des pratiques de gestion qui caractérisent aussi bien la Chine que l'Afrique. Grâce à une revue analytique, notre étude met en évidence les similitudes et les différences des philosophies de gestion, des styles de gestion, du réseautage et de l'entrepreneuriat entre la Chine et l'Afrique. Cette recherche contribue à renforcer les connaissances sur la dynamique des pratiques de gestion des organisations sino-africaines et à mettre en lumière les pratiques de gestion susceptibles de garantir le succès des entreprises chinoises en Afrique.

Mots-Clés : Management Africain, Management Chinois, Pratiques Managériales, Entrepreneuriat, Réseautage

RESUMEN

En los últimos años, China se ha convertido en el socio económico más importante de África. Las empresas chinas de todos los tamaños y de todos los sectores aportan inversiones, conocimientos de gestión y dinamismo empresarial en 54 países afri¬canos. China también da la bienvenida a los inmigrantes africanos que buscan oportuni¬dades de negocios, así como a los estudian¬tes africanos que prosiguen sus estudios en prestigiosas universidades chinas. Por lo tanto, sería útil conocer las prácticas de gestión que caracterizan tanto a China como a África. A través de una revisión analítica, nuestro estudio destaca las similitudes y diferencias en las filosofías de gestión, los estilos de gestión, la creación de redes y el espíritu empresarial entre China y África. Esta investigación contribuye a fortalecer el conocimiento sobre la dinámica de las prácticas de gestión de las organizaciones chino-africanas y a resaltar las prácticas de gestión que probablemente garanticen el éxito de las empresas chinas en África.

Palabras Clave: Gestión africana, gestión china, prácticas gerenciales, emprendimiento, trabajo en red

Managerial practices are a key factor for business development. They are frequently used as an explanatory variable for organisational performance. Studies argue that certain practices of multinationals such as leadership style, organisational decision-making and human resources management (HRM) are shaped by their nationality (Almond, 2011; Pudelko & Harzing, 2007; Zhu, Zhu & Cieri, 2014). Thus, there are many differences between countries and managers of multinationals.

Past research has shown the influence of national culture on management styles (Budhwar & Sparrow, 1998; Hofstede, 1993;

Lok & Crawford, 2004; Poon, Evangelista & Albaum, 2005; Tregaskis, 1997) and has focused on the "convergence/divergence or contextualisation (depending on the context)" of management in general (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007; Sparrow, Schuler & Jackson, 1994; Zhu & Warner, 2019). While the "convergence" theory argues that the behaviour of managers is becoming progressively more similar worldwide as a result of globalisation, the "divergent" theory supports the lack of a universal managerial theory because of the influence of national or regional cultures and presence of country-specific contextual variables related to countries. Thus, some recent studies suggest that managers'

attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and on-going effectiveness vary from culture to culture and that these differences result in variety in management practices (Newman & Nollen, 1996; Bhanugopan, 2014).

For instance, the success of Japanese firms in the 1980s led to the emergence of studies on the existence of best practices (Kaizen) whose convergence could raise a firm's performance (Hamel & Prahalad, 2013; Ouchi, 1981). Several Asian companies are also ranked among the world leaders (Wooldridge, 2010). By contrast, the growth rate in Africa between 2014 and 2017, as estimated by the World Bank, was at 4.5% and expected to reach 5.1% in 2017 (Kegley & Blanton, 2015). Nonetheless, the performance of African firms (Wood, Mazouz, Yin & Cheah, 2014) remains behind that of those in China because the former face a multitude of problems such as corruption, political instability, inefficient legal systems, poor infrastructure, poor access to financial services and technology, unskilled labour, a lack of market information, low demand for goods and services due to widespread poverty, the lack of global competitiveness small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) low quality education, and brain drain (Abor & Quartey, 2010; Igwe, Ogundana, Egere & Anigbo, 2018; Wang, 2016).

There are multiple reasons to compare Chinese and African managerial practices. In recent years, China, a developing country, has attracted attention from experts by becoming one of the world's leading economies by virtue of its GDP, and purchasing power parity statistics as well as the innovation of its enterprises (Alon, Chang, Fetscherin, Lattemann & McIntyre, 2009; He, 2019; Lattemann, Alon, Chang, Fetscherin & McIntyre, 2012). Furthermore, economic ties between China and the Africa have deepened with the rise of the Chinese economy. China,has long been the most important economic partner in Africa. Indeed, the statistics collected from various institutions (MOFCOM, China Statistical Yearbook, Comtrade's trade data, China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment, UNCTAD's Chinese FDI data, and McKinsey & Co) highlight China's engagement in Africa. Trade between Africa and China has increased by about 20% per year since 2018. The value of Sino-African trade in 2017 was $148 billion and foreign direct investment has now reached a staggering annual growth rate of 40%. In 2017, the gross annual turnover of Chinese engineering and construction projects in Africa amounted to over $51.19 billion. Further, China's foreign aid spending increased steadily from $631 million in 2003 to nearly $3 billion in 2015. All of this has resulted in a massive presence of Chinese workers and companies in Africa. Chinese workers are especially distinguished by the number of managerial and entrepreneurial practices on which the remarkable development of their country is based. These practices include business networking (Davies *et al.*, 1995); industrialisation (Ip, 2009), and entrepreneurship (Huang, 2008; Li & Matlay, 2006). An estimated one million Chinese citizens now reside in Africa (Mathews & Yang, 2012; Sun, Jayaram & Kassiri, 2017). Thanks to all these factors, Chinese companies have won major contracts on the continent, mainly in the areas of transport infrastructure and seaports, the energy sector and mining activities. China's increased presence in Africa not only affects not only local communities, economies and cultures, but also the corporate culture of companies. Comparing how Chinese and African companies create their businesses and manage their employees in different national contexts is therefore important for developing management knowledge.

The managerial world is looking for new ideas and perspectives. Despite the cultural differences between the two regions, Chinese managerial practices could constitute a flourishing source of managerial wisdom that could help African economies (Horwitz, Heng, Quazi, Nonkwelo, Roditi & Eck, 2006). Several scholars also recognise a common philosophical, moral, and cultural character through the concepts of Ubuntu (Horwitz, 2013) and Confucius (Björkman, Budhwar, Smale & Sumelius, 2008; Xing, Liu, Tarba & Cooper, 2016). Comparing managerial practices helps to overcome the traditional approaches (Lin, David & Zhao, 2014).

To examine the traits that characterise and distinguish an African from a Chinese manager or entrepreneur this article compares through an analytical literature review, the managerial and entrepreneurial practices of Africans with those of their counterparts in China. These two regions have different cultural values and different degrees of cultural homogeneity. Indeed, based on the cultural dimensions of Hofstede, China and most African countries are characterised by a collectivist national culture and a strong power distance with a long term normative orientation (Badraoui, Lalaouna & Belarouci, 2014; Hofstede, 2001). Comparative studies of African and Chinese managerial practices are scarce. Some of the studies identified by Horwitz (2015) in his systematic review of the literature on managerial practices in multinational companies in Africa have examined the conceptual links between HRM in Asia and Africa (Horwitz, Kamoche, & Chew 2002; Horwitz, 2013; Jackson, Louw, & Zhao, 2013). In their systematic review, Cooke, Veen and Wood (2017) concluded that Africa is also underutilised as a possible source of comparison. Moreover, there are opportunities for further research on management styles based on the increasing trade ties between Africa and Asia (Cooke, Wood & Horwitz, 2015; Zafar, 2007).

This study therefore synthesises the analytical, comparative, and critical literature on African and Chinese managerial styles. The contributions of this study are numerous. It highlights the paradigmatic differences, similarities and relationship between Chinese and African managerial practices. It also strengthens knowledge about the dynamics of the managerial practices of Sino-African organisations and enriches the basis of our knowledge on global management. It further sheds light on the managerial practices that allow Chinese enterprises in Africa to succeed. Specifically, this study reviews the challenges and opportunities of Chinese and African management styles. It also proposes research directions that would extend of theoretical paradigms and current models of the firm. As mentioned by Barnard, Cuervo-Cazurra and Manning (2017) and Beugré (2015), some preconceived ideas or stereotypes require the development of new knowledge and help to promote a business environment conducive to the creation and sustainability of SMEs in Africa. Because of South-South cooperation principles, many African companies are looking for Chinese partners for strategic alliances. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to understand the managerial practices of these two partners and corresponding implications to maximize firm the performance. Ultimately, the mutual knowledge of the cultural values of these partners could will engender cultural proximity that will improve business development (Bidault, José, Zanakis & Ring, 2018; Jiang, Chua, Kotabe & Murray, 2011; Sim & Ali, 1998).

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. In the next section, we present African and Chinese philosophies with an emphasis on their managerial implications. In the third section, we adopt the Planning, Organising, Managing, and Controlling (POMC) phases of Fayol (2016) to highlight managerial styles in Africa and China. The fourth section examines African and Chinese entrepreneurial traits. Finally, the conclusion highlights the limitations of this study, promising research avenues, and the various theoretical and managerial implications.

African Ubuntu, Chinese Confucianism and their Implications for Managerial Practices

The two major philosophies on which African and Chinese management are Ubuntu and Confucianism. Ubuntu is a South African expression that reflects the commonality of African societies (Lutz, 2009) and enables us to distinguish African from Western societies (Letseka & Higgs, 2000). It expresses a worldview and life so deeply rooted in the African person, culture and society that is difficult to define in the Western context. In South African languages, Ubuntu is translated by the corpus '*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (Sanders, 1999). Several translations have been proposed but they do not convey the full meaning of the concept. Mbigi (1997) expressed it as, 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am'. For Battle (2009), it is 'I in you and you in me'. 'A person is a person through other persons, or I am because we are' as stated by Metzand Gaie (2010).

Ubuntu is a philosophical and educational concept because it is centred on the human person. It is the recognition of the human status of a person and superiority of the community. For Africans, it includes the characteristic values of African society such as solidarity, sympathy, respect, friendliness, hospitality, dignity, compassion, sharing, and respect for others (Mbigi, 1997; Prinsloo, 1996). Ubuntu as an expression that denotes the existence of a person through the existence of his/her fellows is common in all African languages and cultures (Shuttle, 1993). In Senegal, the concept of 'Teranga' reflects the spirit of collective hospitality. In Zimbabwe, Ubuntu is translated as 'Ubkhosi' which also metaphorically reflects the important place of man in the African community. Ubuntu attaches great importance to reconciliation amid conflicts and difficulties (Mthembu, 1996). The notion of Ubuntu is thus useful for understanding African educational, managerial, and organisational discourse (Venter, 2014). It is a concept that reflects African cultural heritage sums up all the African humanist wisdom (Mangaliso, 2001).

Another traditional African philosophy provides a platform for individuals to exercise their democratic rights and search for harmony (Barnard, Cuervo-Cazurra & Manning, 2017; Beugré, 2015). It is called 'Kgotla' or the palaver tree (importance given to speech), which is similar to the creation of the Agora by Ancient Greece and the organisation of Roman society in Egypt's pharaonic legacy (Diangitukwa, 2014). Kgotla is an institution serving as a forum for policy formulation and decision-making, including political and economic development activities as well as the judicial system. Every conflict in a family is normally resolved at the family level. If the family fails, it is subject to arbitration by the community, but that does not exclude the fact that some might report their differences. The principle governing Kgotla can be summarised as follows:

'Everyone is free to speak and even make mistakes' (Mompati & Prinsen, 2000). Kgotla is thus a form of participatory democracy or collaborative leadership (Akena, 2019).

Management research encourages the integration of the traditional values promoted by Ubuntu into managerial practices (Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2005). Adopting Ubuntu values can spur the development of a peaceful organisational climate and raise the productivity of work teams. In the way, it may enable Africans to become leaders (Nkomo, 2006) of sustainable business networks capable of generating major entrepreneurial ideas for the continent's development. Ubuntu aims to remodel African values and create a harmonious organisational atmosphere to ultimately provide a new habitus among African managers. This habitus is a source of socialisation and creation of new knowledge for African business practices. Through interactions, Africans can share their experiences and tacit knowledge (Fink, Holden, Karsten & Illa, 2005).

However, the Western and African strands for the literature highlight the values that are the cornerstone of Ubuntu without taking into account the diachronic evolution of African society. Ubuntu is presented with a form of idealism that only exposes the positive aspects of African social norms. Although the concept is widespread in the literature on 'African management', it can be questioned on several points (West, 2014). Ubuntu has not been widely studied empirically (Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013). Therefore, the generalisation of the concept to Africa may be unfounded. *Homo homini lupus*, used by Plautus, and later by Thomas Hobbes to formulate his theory of Leviathan, emphasises the insecurity of some Africans towards their fellows. This negative aspect of Africans which is being integrated into management in Africa was also emphasised by Kamdem & Teko (2015).

Traditional Chinese values are influenced by four schools of thought: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism (Mencius, 372-289 BC) and legalism. Confucianism, however, has the greatest influence (King & Bond, 1985; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). It combines practically all the other schools of thought. Confucianism advocates a harmonious life through discipline, human relations, ethics, politics, and business relations (Lam, 2006; Xing *et al.*, 2016). Respect for elders, deference to authority, consciousness of social rank, modesty, and especially harmony are the central elements of Confucianism. Confucian values are shared by the institutes of Confucius (Tweed & Lehman, 2002) as well as by some Chinese multinationals (Xing *et al.*, 2016). Confucius is positively translated into discourses on a 'harmonious socialist society' (Lam, 2006). These promote the development of virtue and encourage moderation, solidarity, humility, endurance, perseverance and especially compassion (Chen, 2008; Huang & Ding, 2006; Tsui, Tong & Mitra, 2009).

The Confucian tradition is generally cited as the main, if not the only source of the Chinese culture. Indeed, because of the strong societal change in China, it is unwise to try to present China as a culturally homogeneous entity. Having undergone several sociocultural and economic transformations over the past 30 years, Chinese culture is far from homogeneous. Today, China represents a world of contrasts and the engines of Chinese behaviour have three main sources of influence known as the 3Cs: Confucianism, communism, and capitalism. The works of some authors illustrate this Chinese reality (Keller & Kronstedt, 2005; Yang, 2012).

TABLE 1		
Common characteristics of African and Chinese cultural values and their managerial implications		
Ubuntu, Kgotla / Confucianism	**Managerial implications**	**References**
Sense of unity	– Team building	– Brooks & Brooks (1998) – Battle (2009); Metz & Gaie (2010)
Governance	– Policy formulation, decision-making; collaborative leadership	– Akena (2019) – Barnard *et al.*, (2017) – Beugré (2015) – Diangitukwa (2014). – Mompati & Prinsen (2000).
Benevolence	– Promoting love, building trust – Social network building – Reconciling and resolving conflicts – Self-cultivation	– Huang & Ding (2006); Low (2012); Mthembu, (1996); Nkomo (2006); Mangaliso, (2001).
Humility	– Avoiding being egotistical and being simple to attract people – Endurance, patience, and determination	– Low, (2012); Brooks & Brooks (1998); Mbigi (1997), Prinsloo (1996)
Returning and paying back to the community	– Ensuring corporate social responsibility (CSR) (donations, building community hospitals, schools, etc.)	– Brooks & Brooks (1998); Prinsloo, (1996); Nkomo (2006)

Source: Based on the literature

Indeed, from 1949 to 1979, Confucianism was replaced by the principles of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism by the Chinese Communist Party (Meissner, 2006). The communist heritage has conveyed values such as the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-denial, sense of discipline and collectivism. Therefore, all planned economic activities had to obey 'human consciousness' instead of following the laws of economics. The spread of capitalism since 1979 has favoured openness and economic reform aimed at improving the efficiency of economic activities and empowering workers (Sachs & Woo, 2001).

In these new circumstances, the Chinese have not only adopted new lifestyles, but also begun a transition in their behaviour and mentality (Lynton & Thøgersen, 2010). Having gradually accepted the notions of market, competition, profit and money, they are becoming more 'rational'. They individually seek to create means of enriching themselves above all else. Within a few years, individual enrichment has become an irresistible attraction, and self-seeking interest has taken over (Warner, 2010). It is therefore difficult to provide an equivocal definition of Chinese cultural values and its educational system which is often criticised for its lack of critical thinking by learners.

Confucianism emphasises hierarchical interpersonal relationships. Thus, the Chinese government has actively promoted the virtues of Confucianism so as to encourage the development of a 'harmonious society'. Moreover, since the 1920s, a new Confucian movement has emerged. Neo-Confucians warn that desires can infringe morality and that profits must be subject to morality. For example, in the modern Confucian enterprise, leadership is encouraged (Ip, 2009).

Ubuntu, Kgotla and Confucianism represent the main philosophical visions of the Afro-Chinese world. Xing *et al.* (2016) showed that the cultural proximity between Ubuntu and Confucianism significantly influences Chinese and African managerial practices. These visions, although humanistic or philosophical, provide useful information for management practices in Africa and China. They contrast most of the firm theories developed in the West (profit-seeking) and emphasise the social dimension of firms (Manning, Kannothra & Wissman-Weber, 2017). This is summarised in the famous quote by the Dalai Lama cited by Braithwaite (2002: 3) 'Learning to forgive is much more useful than merely picking up a stone and throwing it at the object of one's anger, the more so when the provocation is extreme. For it is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good both for oneself and for others'.

In Africa, Ubuntu means that the person is a person through other people (Fink *et al.*, 2005), while Confucianism focuses on interpersonal relationships in the Chinese context. Both refer to certain virtues convertible under managerial principles such as entrepreneurship, leadership, network development and organisational management (Fink *et al.*, 2005) in the overall sense of the theme (Table 1). These two concepts as managerial philosophies can influence Western management in both China and Africa, and may generate a hybrid management system.

African and Chinese Management Styles

Managerial practices refer to a set of activities performed by the manager to achieve the objectives of the company. Henri Fayol (1841-1925) was one of the first authors to support an administrative approach to the organisation. The concept of POMC summarises the imperative components of Fayol's administrative vision. Aktouf (2012) summarised the ideal management functions in the era of knowledge economy. The POMC concept has been adapted by several authors (Ackoff, 1981; Kaplan & Atkinson, 2015). In this paper, we will use POMC to analyse the literature and extract the way in which Chinese and African managers conceive and practice these attributes.

Planning in African and Chinese Enterprises

Planning is about determining set objectives and the means to achieve them. The existence of a plan or a vision, its characteristics (flexibility or rigidity), and its implementation by a manager are important to the success of the company.

Lack of managerial skills is perceived as a major obstacle to the implementation of strategic planning in African enterprises (Meyer & Xin, 2017). For the same authors, African companies lack the talent to plan the vision of the company. This managerial deficit has negative effects on the propensity of African firms to innovate and take risks when confronted with uncertainty (Murimbika & Urban, 2013). The managers of African SMEs lack strategic vision (Mayegle & Omam, 2015) or sometimes their vision is limited. This view is supported by several authors that criticise poor time management being one of the weaknesses of African cultural value systems (Faye, 2004; Kamdem, 2000). According to Samuel (2017), planners lack reliable information systems and plans remain formal. African firms rarely have the strategic tools to accelerate decision-making processes from policy formulation or implement in a timely manner (Stan-Maduka, 2010).

Decision-making comes from the head of the company and the objectives are rarely shared with all the company's employees, according to Jackson (2004) who also adds that African management styles are characterised by rigidity and slow bureaucracy. This lack of planning puts African companies at a disadvantage in terms of resources and capabilities such as capital, technology, and experience. Companies lack the strategic alliances needed to gain better access to key resources, acquire necessary skills, and operate partner networks to enter export markets (Acquaah, Zoogah & Kwesiga, 2013; Tvedten *et al.*, 2014).

In Chinese companies, management level plans by considering market forces and the long-term strategic objectives of the organisation (Wakabayashi, Kondo & Chen, 2001). However, as noted by Martinsons, Davison and Huang (2017), the failures of Chinese enterprises show that the vision of the company as well as its specific objectives, and strategic plans are less distinct. Some plans are supported by a rigorous information system (Yan & Davison, 2011).

In China, participating in decision-making and setting of business objectives between management and workers are two sides of the coin under the concept of participatory management (Zheng & Lamond, 2009). Conceiving the business as a family translates into action. This democratic participation arises not only in the general policy, but also in the organisation of companies. This allows employees to express their opinions freely and exchange ideas with the head of the company while still respecting the hierarchy. In other words, the voice of subordinates is important for the development of the company. This idea is in line with the ideas of Mayo (1880–1949) of the human relations school. Still on China, Buckley, Clegg and Tan (2006) demonstrated that the optimal management of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), relies on the withdrawal of government interference in planning. Table 2 shows the similarities and differences in Sino-African managerial practices with regard to planning.

Organisation of Activities in African and Chinese Companies

Organisation here means the precise determination of activities and the way they must be coordinated to achieve the goals of the company. It refers to the company's structure, organisation of work in its various forms, coordination of work, nature of rules, delegation of authority, and management style. Good

organisation requires a rigorous selection system that creates lofty performance expectations and highlights the importance of human capital to organisations (Zheng & Lamond, 2009).

Bocco (2013) and Mamboundou (2003) emphasise that African companies are characterised by individual management and that this leads to a strong centralisation of decision-making process. In Africa, the leader has absolute power (traditional legitimacy). He/she is like the 'almighty'. Culturally, one cannot contest the chief's decisions (Riotte, Diakite & Bourguet-Chassagnon, 2010). The chief delegates very little, and when he/she does, it is often about responsibilities without profound consequences. African companies are characterised by rigid bureaucracy (Ondari-Okemwa & Smith, 2009). Some recent works on the management of SMEs suggest that the proximity of the leader, that is, his family and his ethnicity, influence the rigidity of rules (Boukar & Soukiwai, 2015; Hansen, Langevang, Rutashobya & Urassa, 2017; Nkakleu, 2016). Elliot, Zhu and Wang (2019), in their study on inter-firm trust between Chinese and Africans, concluded that African firms have a horizontal collectivist orientation (cultural model in which the individual sees himself/herself as a member of an internal group whose members are all alike), whereas Chinese firms have a vertical collectivist orientation (cultural model in which the individual sees himself as a member of an internal group differentiated by his/her status).

Westwood and Lok (2003) demonstrated the high centrality of work in China whose authoritarian culture influences the thinking and behaviour of business leaders (Su & Wright, 2012). Chinese employees rarely take the initiative to give critical feedback or suggest improvements to projects in the company (Akhtar, Ding & Ge, 2008). Bureaucracy is prevalent in enterprises (Yasheng, 1990). To maintain a good relationship with the local government, some recruitment by Chinese enterprises can be made locally or from other provinces due to the lack of professionals in the local labour market (Ding, Ge & Warner, 2004). Recruitment policies are differ across companies (Björkman & Lu, 1999; Shen & Edwards, 2004). Chinese companies sometimes use headhunting firms but they also recruit from personal contacts or people recommended by family members and friends (Braun & Warner, 2002; Zhu & Warner, 2019), which is similar to the African practice (Ofori *et al.*, 2012). Hence, the rules are not rigid in Chinese companies.

In China, with the development of technology, recruitment can also be made through websites such as 51job.com. Chinese and African recruitment processes are similar in that psychometric tests are rarely used and tasks at the organisational level are described less formally (Fabre & Paris, 2011). In both Chinese and African companies, employees must be versatile and have a wide range of skills and abilities (Mamboundou, 2003; Su & Wright, 2012). Table 2 shows the similarities and differences in Sino-African managerial practices with regards to organisation.

Management (or Leadership) in African and Chinese Enterprises

Management refers to the process by which the leader positively influences the organisational members to encourage them to participate voluntarily to achieve the objectives of the company. In China, as in several African countries, the leader is legitimate and accepted by his/her subordinates without considering his/

her utilitarian values. His leadership position is maintained by intra- and extra-organisational structural arrangements as well as with deep historical foundations in some cases (Nzelibe, 1986). The leader in China, far from being a follower, may lack technical skills. This is also the case in Africa. For example, for Ugandans, honesty and reliability are the attributes of a good leader (Acquaah *et al.*, 2013). The results of the study of leadership in Africa by Jones, Blunt and Sharma (1996) showed that managers value leadership, not performance. This is consistent with the higher levels of power distance that characterise Asian and African societies (Hofstede, 1980), with dominant family and patrimonial structures. In many African contexts, emphasis is placed on a leader's ability to perform his obligations to his/her ethnic affiliates (Nzelibe, 1986).

African and Chinese societies tend to be egalitarian within age groups, but hierarchical or gerontocratic between age groups (Horwitz, Heng & Quazi, 2003; Ma, 2007). Hierarchy is seen as the natural means of controlling social relationship in China as well as in Africa. This is consistent with the natural order of power relations (Kirkbride, Tang & Westwood, 1991). In particular, African leaders give a prominent place to subservience and deference. This hierarchical level has negative consequences on the ability to delegate responsibilities (Elkan, 1988). Thus, Chinese and African leaders are often required to behave in a paternalistic and autocratic manner (Jones *et al.*, 1996). Some studies attribute the success of African firms to focusing on the paternalistic, authoritarian, and humanistic style of management as a means of controlling (Jones *et al.*, 1996; Warner, 2011). The rules are not clearly stated, are less convincing, do not consider the assent of members of the company, and are generally oral (Boisot & Liang, 1992; Kamdem, 2000).

Horwitz *et al.* (2006) also noted the convergence of certain managerial practices in Africa and Asia especially regarding salaries, job motivation and employee retention. In Africa, compensation systems include personal recognition and promotion, access to medical facilities, salary increments, bonuses, seniority, and good rapport with the manager (Ayanda & Sani, 2011; Azolukwam & Perkins, 2009; Ofori *et al.*, 2012; Okpara & Wynn, 2008). However, salary increments influence organisational performance both in Africa (Ayanda & Sani, 2011) and in China (Mok & Yeung, 2005). Premiums in China are a guarantee of the protections used to retain staff in a highly competitive market (Ding *et al.*, 2004), but they are paid based on individual and collective performance (Braun & Warner, 2002; Zhu & Warner, 2019).

Several studies highlight the severe limitations of human capital in Africa (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011; Cooke *et al.*, 2015), particularly in terms of skills, training, and knowledge management (Makinda, 2007; Taylor, 2009). However, progressively more African organisations that are concerned about staff training because of its beneficial results to the firm. According to Okpara and Wynn (2008), Nigerian managers have indicated that training and development activities have a positive effect on the performance of their organisations.

In China, training and knowledge transfer have major impacts on business development. They are also sources of motivation for employees (Fryxell, Dooley & Li, 2004). Large Chinese firms are willing to invest heavily in staff training and development, while small firms tend to provide minimal or basic training.

In some cases, training may only include basic information on the company culture, job description and, working environment (Ding et al., 2004) and culture, to enable staff members to familiarise themselves with the company's (Wang, Zhou, Lu & Jiang, 2005). In China, some companies choose to send their employees outside for training while complementing it with internal capacity building activities (Braun & Warner, 2002) using mentoring and coaching (practices that are still underdeveloped in Africa).

In African and Chinese organisations, the learning style is based on a humanistic approach as opposed to the scholastic approach of the West. In African enterprises, knowledge transfer policies are scarce (Ondari-Okemwa, 2004). By contrast in China, the main issue is the need to retain talented staff (Cunningham & Rowley, 2007) by allowing them to share knowledge collectively. Employees in Chinese manufacturing companies prefer to keep their implicit knowledge and are only willing to share informally. A range of factors derived from Chinese culture, such as an awareness of the hierarchy, the fear of losing face, a sense of modesty, competitiveness, and a preference for face-to-face communication, may impede knowledge management in Chinese organisations (Tsui *et al.*, 2009). Table 2 summaries of the similarities and differences in the Sino-African managerial practices with regard to management.

Control processes of African and Chinese Enterprises

Finally, control (monitoring) is about ensuring that activities produce the desired results. According to Massie and Hepworth (1987), 'control is the process that measures current performance and guides it toward some predetermined goal'. Several authors state that SMEs understand the need for a management control system (Mayegle & Omam, 2015). However, control procedures are often perceived as threats. The typical African does not accept objective criticism (Mayegle & Omam, 2015). Learning by mistake is rarely being used in African management. Thus, culturally, control is considered malicious. One of the challenges faced by African organisations is thus the lack of an effective evaluation and oversight framework, which hampers the effective implementation of performance management in public and private organisations. Formal mechanisms for managing governance performance in organisations are limited (Acquaah *et al.*, 2013). In African societies, power is concentrated at the top and only the entrepreneur can induce change and make adjustments at the organisational level.

In China, the wider use of objective performance measures in the management control framework is recommended by some authors. Control must be based on facts and allow employees to improve (O'Connor, Deng & Luo, 2006; Zhou, Lu & Jiang, 2005). Chinese employees value learning by doing or by trial and error (Deng, 2009; Martinsons, Davison & Huang, 2017). Chinese SOEs use modern measures of evaluation as effective tools to improve efficiency and productivity (Bai & Bennington, 2005). One of the major roles of Chinese leaders is to evaluate their subordinates without considering the social relationships that bind them. In other words, social bonds do not affect the performance evaluations governed by the principles of employees saving face (Mianzi) if they have made mistakes (Wang *et al.*, 2005). The

	Africa	Reference	China	Reference
TABLE 2 **Profile of managerial practices in Africa and China based on POMC phases**				
Planning	– Lack of talent to plan the vision – Centralisation of decision-making – Lack of technical and managerial skills – Lack of strategic alliances – Slow decision-making – Non-existent innovation and rigidity of the plan	– Acquaah *et al.* (2013) – Jackson (2004) – Murimbika & Urban (2013) – Stan-Maduka (2010) – Tvedten *et al.* (2014)	– Less plan of the vision and the objectives of the firm – Long term strategic plan – Consensus building on societal values – Company perceived as a family (Participatory management, good name of family, and personal self-image strengthened) – Employee's opinion is important for decision-making – Alliance plan and strategic partnerships	– Buckley *et al.*, (2006) – Zheng & Lamond, (2009)
Organising	– Higher hierarchical distance and difficulties in delegating power – Traditional legitimacy – Little delegation – Rigidity of bureaucracy – Ethnicity recruitment (Nepotism) – Vertical collectivist orientation – Slight use of recruitment sites, recommended by friends, family members (rarely recruitment agencies) – Absence of psychometric recruitment tests – Non-compliance with job description	– Fabre & Paris (2011) – Ofori *et al.* (2012) – Elliot *et al.* (2019)	– Higher hierarchical distance – Lack of initiative – The prevalence of bureaucracy (SOE) – Maintenance of social links – Different types of recruitment based on local and family relations (nepotism) – Horizontal collectivist orientation – Use of recruitment sites (headhunting firms) – Absence of psychometric recruitment tests – High tolerance of fellow members – Non-respect of job descriptions	– Björkman & Lu, (1999) – Braun & Warner (2002) – Ding *et al.* (2004) – Elliot *et al.* (2019)

Managing	– Autocratic and paternalistic leadership
	– Leader must respect social and ethnic commitments
	– The leader's technical and managerial skills are less important
	– Emphasis on social relationships
	– Failure to respect pay scales
	– Personal recognition, medical facilities, salary increases, bonuses and gratuities
	– Resistance to organisational change
	– Non-existence of KM policy
	– Obsolete training plan
	– Humanistic Learning
		– Acquaah *et al.* (2013)
		  Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, (2011)
		– Ayanda & Sani (2011)
		– Azolukwam & Perkins (2009)
		– Cooke *et al.* (2015)
		– Horwitz *et al.* (2003)
		– Jackson *et al.* (2008)
		– Kamoche *et al.* (2012)
		– Makinda, (2007)
		– Ofori *et al.* (2012)
		– Okpara & Wynn (2008)
		– Ondari-Okemwa (2004)
		– Taylor (2009)
			– Autocratic and paternalistic leadership
			– Leader must embody harmony, volunteerism and honesty
			– The leader's technical and managerial skills are less important
			– Emphasis on social relationships
			– Pay-for-performance employment
			– Bonuses, gratuities and others are paid (individual & collective performances)
			– Resistance to organisational change
			– KM as key organisational development
			– Informal and collective sharing of knowledge
			– Ambitious training plan (coaching/mentoring
			– Humanistic Learning
			– High achiever
				– Acquaah *et al.* (2013)
				  Braun & Warner (2002)
				– Cunningham & Rowley (2007)
				– Ding *et al.* (2004)
				– Fryxell *et al.* (2004)
				– Hofstede (1980)
				– Horwitz *et al.* (2003)
				  Ma (2007)
				– Kirkbride *et al.* (1991)
				– Mok & Yeung (2005)
				– Tsui *et al.* (2009)
				– Wang *et al.* (2005a)
				– Warner (2011)
				– Zhu *et al.* (2008)

Controlling	– Understand the need for control systems – Control is culturally considered malicious – Control procedures are often perceived as threats – Complex controlling rules and procedures – Bureaucratic monitoring – Lack of an effective evaluation framework – Sometimes the control is biased	– Acquaah *et al.* (2013)	– Modern evaluation tools – Use of management control framework – Value learning by doing or by trial and error – Neutral evaluation (not considering social ties) – Evaluation for the implementation of training policies	– Bai & Bennington (2005) – Braun & Warner (2002) – Farh *et al.* (2007)

Source : Based on the literature

employee appraisal system allows companies to know which training is to be undertaken by staff (Braun & Warner, 2002) as well as provides them with feedback on performance (Braun & Warner, 2002). Table 2 summarises the similarities and differences in Sino-African managerial practices with regard to control.

In summary, compared with Africans, Chinese managers achieve higher results by building on societal values, mobilising the support of all employees, and adopting strategic partnerships to make the organisation proactive and creative. Concerning organising and managing, the review of the literature reveals that significant similarities exist in terms of the leadership, power distance, recruitment, compensation, learning, job description, and social relationships between China and Africa.

The leader in these regions is not perceived as a coach who offers dynamic and personalised support to team members to enable them to identify their own solutions to their problems. They rather manage training and knowledge dissemination differently. For the Chinese, it emphasises learning, where mistakes can be tolerated, whereas the control procedures in Africa are often perceived as threats; hence, the process does not foster employee learning.

Entrepreneurial and Networking Capacities in China and Africa

The study of entrepreneurship is a key component of research on economic development in Africa (Acquaah *et al*., 2013; Kiggundu, 2013; Saint, 2015; Walsh, 2015) and in China (Chu, Kara, Zhu & Gok, 2011; Li & DaCosta, 2016). Entrepreneurship contributes to social prosperity and social mobility (Louw, Van Eeden, Bosch & Venter, 2003). After political and economic reforms were introduced in China in the 1970s, entrepreneurship played a major role in its economic and structural transformation (Anderson, Li, Harrison & Robson, 2003). In Africa, despite the many business opportunities (Chironga, Leke, Lund, & Van Wamelen, 2011; Walsh, 2015) and programmes that promote entrepreneurial initiatives, economic growth is more centred on foreign investment. The Chinese entrepreneurial spirit is reflected in the following Chinese proverb: 'It is better to be a chicken's head than a phoenix's tail' (Li & Liang, 2015). In China, the most important driving forces behind entrepreneurship include earning a higher income, the desire to become the boss, and a need for success (Chu *et al*., 2011; Pistrui, Huang, Oksoy, Jing & Welsch, 2001). The success factors identified as relevant among Chinese people include reputation, honesty, risk aversion, hard work, optimism, and pragmatism (Birdthistle *et al*., 2011; Chu *et al*., 2011; Li & Liang, 2015; Birdthistle *et al*., 2011).

Africa's population rose from 478 million in 1980 to about 1.2 billion at present, and is projected to increase to 1.5 billion by 2025 and 2.4 billion by 2050 (Economic Commission for Africa, 2019). By 2050, the Chinese population will have stabilised. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are approximately five million SMEs (Ardington *et al*., 2016; Zoogah *et al*., 2015). African microenterprises provide marginal jobs. Half of small formal enterprises with more than 10 employees are owned by residents of Eastern and Central Asian origin (Schulpen & Gibbon, 2002).

In both Africa and China, governments can no longer respond to job demands; however, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the young population is growing. Today, 62% of young people in Africa are working age compared with only 17% in China. The median age in Sub-Saharan Africa is 18.6 years, lower than any region globally. In the 2000s, the over 31.5 million Chinese enterprises were estimated to provide 70% of tax revenues and 90% of employment (Hung & Whittington, 2011; Fung, Pei & Zhang, 2006). Indeed, the reforms implemented by China have resulted in strong growth in SOEs and SMEs through the creation of industrial zones and districts, private enterprises, and joint ventures with foreign companies (Cunningham & Rowley, 2007; Lewis *et al*., 2013).

Entrepreneurship in Africa operates in an environment that is strongly influenced by government policies. Kenyan and Ghanaian entrepreneurs have found that government's support and political stability have enhanced their companies' development (Chu *et al*., 2007). Governments play an active role in economic and industrial policy by providing basic public goods and services. However, some authors note that public policies do not contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills in Africa (Edoho, 2015). Ahmed and Nwankwo (2013) provided insights into the key factors influencing entrepreneurship in Africa. For the authors, many challenges remain such as the lack of access to finance and credit (Aghion *et al*., 2007), lack of training in technology (Biggs & Srivastava, 1996; Asongu & Le Roux, 2017) and telecommunications (e.g developing e-business), and the low income of African consumers. Other difficulties such as lack of market information, unfair competition, and above all, lack of managerial skills (Fatoki & Asah, 2011). Sonobe *et al*. (2011) and Beamish (2018) found that of basic management training should improve business practices and performance in Ghana

Another major feature of the Chinese culture is the importance of social networks and family in business relations in China. The study of social networks has a long tradition in academic research and covers several disciplines of the social sciences. Networks are explored from the theory of social capital and social exchange (Putnam, 2001). Gilmore and Carson (1999) define network as: "A collection of individuals who may or may not be known to each other and who in some way contribute something to the entrepreneur, either passively, reactively, or proactively elicited or not". Thus defined, the importance of networking is universally accepted as a key attribute of business success and entrepreneurial activity (Foley, 2008; Foley & O'Connor, 2013). In China, the family provides a form of mentoring to its members and employees are treated as members of the same family (Tsui *et al*., 2009).

Social networking is important in order to adapt to the new demands of the economy. It allows entrepreneur to find innovative solutions to the needs of their clients. Networks allow the entrepreneurs to expand their contacts, find business associates, support and opportunities, and help build trust to satisfy clients' needs (Foley, 2008; Johannisson, Alexanderson, Nowicki & Senneseth, 1994). In China, the concept of Guanxi is used to represent a network. Guanxi is an essential element of business promotion in China (Wilson & Brennan, 2010). Although Guanxi has multiple definitions, it refers to a form of relationship in the Chinese context based on interpersonal trust (Cui, Wen, Xu & Qin, 2013). For example, *Tsai et al*., (2013) found that Guanxi allows information sharing, confidence

TABLE 3
Comparative study of Chinese and African entrepreneurial skills

	Africa	China
Reasons for entrepreneurial actions	– Increase income – Become own boss	– Increase income – Become own boss – Proof of success
Source of opportunities	– More imitation of existing ventures	– Individual creativity but also imitation
Discovery of opportunities	– Fortuitous discovery	– Systematic search and fortuitous discovery
Nascent entrepreneurs	– Survival activities – Lack of experiences and managerial skills – Low level of education	– Young educated/experienced – Full use of resources/abilities – Savings – Risk taking – Optimists and pragmatists
Entrepreneurial culture and risk taking	– Different, depending on the regions	– Well-developed entrepreneurial culture
Entrepreneurial and the use of social network – Family – Ethnic – inter enterprises	– Strong – Strong – Rivalry	– Strong – Strong – Competition / rivalry
Job creation	– Marginal	– Full
Power distance and collectivism	– High with low entrepreneurial capacities	– High with high entrepreneurial capacities
Knowledge transfer	– Marginal	– Reinforced by Guanxi
ICT level	– High penetration with low users	– High penetration with high users
Government support	– Marginal (request for pledge)	– Important

Source: Based on the literature

building, and organisational learning. Likewise, Khavul, Bruton, and Wood (2009) showed that entrepreneurs in Africa use family and ethnic networks to ensure business development. Some authors, however, find that African entrepreneurs face difficulties in establishing and maintaining effective networks (Okpara & Irwin, 2011).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the use of networks, while crucial for business success, remains under-optimised (Tvedten *et al.*, 2014). For McDade and Spring (2005), 'new generation' African entrepreneurs rely on entrepreneurial networks founded on economic integration clusters. Young Africans have entrepreneurial skills, but these need support to develop them in order to cope with the labour market. Table 3 compares studies of the entrepreneurial skills of the Chinese and Africans.

Conclusion and implications

This study compares managerial and entrepreneurial practices between China and Africa to identify the challenges and opportunities that Chinese multinationals may face in their operations in Africa. Managing the corporate culture is the key factor behind organisational change and business success. This study thus explains the specific features of Chinese and African management as well as identifies the characteristics, behaviours, and ideologies that distinguish African entrepreneurs from their Chinese counterparts.

In so doing, it contributes to the body of literature on Sino-African business management as well as the emerging literature on China's engagement in Africa and its implications for human capital development. The China-Africa inter-market partnership

has been the most active transcontinental trade relationship of the last decade (Elliot *et al.* 2019; Syed, Metcalfe, Ali & Ekuma, 2018). China's presence in Africa has introduced a new geo-political dynamic that should be integrated into the way how international HRM is being studied; yet few studies have been undertaken at the organisational level. These are important because the presence of Chinese multinationals in Africa may add new perspectives to the debate on international HRM.

Since the early 2000s, studies on management practices in China have increased (Warner, 2010), whereas, the analysis of African management is still an emerging concept (Kiggundu, 2013). Many studies offer a critical and analytical review of African management (Nkomo, 2011; Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013; Zoogah *et al.*, 2015). However, this review compares African management with that of China over time. Africa and China are both influenced by managerial practices from the other region. It is thus necessary to understand the differences and consider formulating a hybrid approach that values the differences between the two cultures. Hofstede's (1984) studies show that cultures influence each other. Africa and China can offer valuable insights and managerial wisdom to debates on management issues, notably around the concepts of *Ubuntu* and Confucianism.

This study is timely because since 2018, China's total imports and exports to Africa have amounted to $204 billion (MOFCOM, 2019). In 2018, 81,562 African students from the 54 African countries were pursuing their studies in China's higher education institutions. According to the SAIS-CARI (2019) database, thousands of Chinese workers are employed in Africa, including in about 10,000 Chinese companies (Jayaram, Kassiri & Sun, 2017). There are also thousands of African workers in cities such

as Guangzhou, Yiwu, and Shanghai. In the Chinese companies in African countries surveyed by McKinsey (2017), 89% of employees are African (Oqubay & Lin, 2019). However, some studies have found conflicting relationships between Chinese and Africans owing to the long work hours, absence of a written contract, resistance to unionisation, more frequent violations of labour regulations, unfavourable wage conditions, communication barriers, and poor knowledge of local management (Abodohoui, Su & Da-Silva, 2018, Lee, 2017; Sautman & Hairong, 2016).

If the investments and activities of Chinese enterprises accelerate, the future of Africa has considerable advantages. African countries could mobilise larger investments to increase their productivity, competitiveness, and technological readiness, and tens of millions of additional African workers could secure stable employment (Sun, Jayaram & Kassiri, 2017). To achieve these ambitions, knowledge of Chinese and African management practices is important. Given the globalisation and internationalisation of Chinese companies, progressively more Chinese are likely to settle in Africa and they must seek to become familiar with management practices. Hence, the information provided by our research will be useful to foreign and national practitioners for developing relevant HRM policies and practices.

Within every culture, fundamental values nourish and enliven members and inspire them to develop. More importantly, every society has its strengths and weaknesses, which manifest in business practice. In China and Africa, it is necessary to pursue the best practices in both worlds, although it is sometimes difficult to adapt successful models. To achieve this goal, strong leadership is required, and leaders must have the ability to reconcile polarities and manage diversity. From a holistic perspective, we will no longer speak of the 'one best practice' but rather of a totality of 'best practices'. In other words, best practices from the West, East, Africa, and others will all be considered to form a new entity of practices that can respond to the demands of globalisation (i.e. a geocentric model).

The Chinese presence in Africa is now well established. Similarly, Africans are present both in Chinese universities and in large firms in Chinese cities. Although cultural differences can be perceived as a major management problem, the Yin/Yang perspective suggests that cultures do not collide mechanically, but rather inspire and ignite the learning processes of intercultural management (Fang, 2010), often leading to cultural hybridisation. The transfer of Afro-Chinese knowledge can be supported by the cultural proximity translated by *Ubuntu* and Confucianism (Xing *et al.*, 2016). Just as Africa can learn from China, China can also learn from its experiences in Africa (Horwitz, Kamoche & Chew, 2002).

Research on African management is rarely published in the highest rated journals. Apart from in South Africa, researchers are only just beginning to understand the development of business in these countries. New lenses are needed to understand and explain African management (Zoogah & Zoogah, 2014) because it is still poorly conceptualised (Hernandez & Kamdem, 2007). The existing literature also highlights the need for more transnational studies of Sino-African management styles (Cooke, Veen & Wood, 2017). Further examination based on empirical research on the differences in management style in these two regions is clearly needed. More precise measurements of management style dimensions such as the cultural dimensions of Hofstede, Trompenaars, and Hall should also be developed to better understand the managerial styles of China and Africa. Africans must attempt to compensate for their lack of managerial skills (Tvedten *et al.*, 2014), education, and training (Walsh, 2015) by appropriating new communication technologies and knowledge management in African enterprises. The concept of networks must also be studied and implemented in intra-African business relations because this encourages collaborative entrepreneurship. The African Diaspora, like the Chinese Diaspora, can organise itself into a learning network (Cooke *et al.*, 2015).

One of the major limitations is that this study is based on a content analysis. Future studies should therefore focus on empirical research on African and Chinese managers and entrepreneurs. Finally, according to China-Africa studies of management, *Ubuntu* and *Kongzi* (Confucianism) are two concepts that intersect in these two regions. Both concepts have been used to highlight the social, political, or philosophical characteristics of African people. However, because of the diversity across Africa, it is difficult to generalise *Ubuntu* to the entire continent. It is therefore necessary to conduct future research on the paradigm of *Ubuntu* that translates much of the African managerial philosophy.

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