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ORGANIZING THE AFRICA ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT 2016 CONFERENCE: CHAIRS' REFLECTIONS

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THE CONFERENCE THEME AND VENUE AND WHY THEY WERE CHOSEN

Over the last few years there has been a feast of well-told stories about the continent of Africa moving from a hopeless place, one constantly consumed by wars, disease, poverty and struggling economies to a now much talked-about 'Africa Rising' (The Economist, 2011), an Africa now open for business (Kgomoeswana, 2015). When it came to choosing the theme for the Africa Academy of Management (AFAM) 3rd Biennial Conference, we selected '*Managing Africa's Future: Prospects and Challenges*'. This followed lengthy discussions of the theme's timeliness, appropriateness and whether or not it would facilitate critical conversations about managing organizations in the new emerging Africa. We wanted a theme that would allow us to explore questions of if and how management scholarship was contributing to the 'new Africa'. We arrived at this decision with a firm understanding and belief that if there was indeed an African Renaissance taking place, we needed to investigate what had changed in Africa, especially in those countries doing well and among the fastest growing in the world. What was happening in organizations in Africa? How had African countries that were now thriving managed to overcome the barriers that restricted their growth and impeded progress? Leadership, management and effective and sustaining implementation had for decades eluded organizations and reduced their potential to grow, partly limited by political instability and weak or disconnected institutions (Dia, 1996; Kiggundu, 1989; 1991). The question of whether or not there was a different, more progressive and inclusive leadership style and management practice taking place in Africa was intriguing and fascinating enough for management scholars to investigate (e.g. Kets de Vries, Sexton, and Ellen 111, 2016). We were interested in the question of the relevancy and applicability for Africa of management knowledge and practices developed elsewhere. We were, however, guided by the strong conviction that management matters and that advancing management scholarship in all its dimensions – theory, research, education, policy, practice and service – in and about Africa was necessary for sustaining the continent's economic growth, social and political development and transformation. These questions and considerations shaped and led to the conference theme for the AFAM 2016 Conference.

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The mission of the Africa Academy of Management is to advance management and organizational scholarship and practice in and about Africa, and to support scholars interested in learning about Africa's diversity, complexity and context (see www.aom.africa.org). AFAM therefore has set itself the goal of being truly pan-African. In light of this, African universities and their business and management schools and related faculties interested in management studies were invited to put in a bid to host the conference. Strathmore Business School (SBS) in Nairobi, Kenya put in a bid to host the conference and was selected from a competitive list of business schools. This created collaboration between AFAM and Strathmore Business School and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed. As a result of this collaboration, SBS was included as a sponsor for the conference. SBS was then advertized on the AFAM program and website. In addition, SBS also agreed to participate in organizing the faculty development workshop for their junior faculty in collaboration with AFAM. Working with AFAM, SBS assisted with the following:

1. Invited participation of other institutions, governments, companies and other agencies to participate and serve as secondary sponsors and co-sponsors within the guideline jointly agreed upon by AFAM and SBS.
2. Provided meeting space as well as audio-visual equipment needed for the conference.
3. Arranged and catered the opening reception, coffee breaks and the closing ceremony banquet.
4. Photocopying and printing of program materials.
5. Arranged for local site visits to tourist attractions and businesses to enrich the experience of the visiting conference delegates.
6. Provided transportation between hotels and the conference venue for the conference delegates.

SBS is a leading business school in Africa. Since opening its doors in 2006, it has trained over 600 business leaders in the MBA program, which requires applicants to have had at least five years of managerial experience. It also offers short, customized, in-house leadership programs that have been attended by over 1,500 executive and middle-level managers from both the private and public sectors. (For more details about SBS and its programs, visit www.sbs.ac.ke)

'Jambo! Karibu Kenya!' were the first words we learnt to say in Kiswahili. Kenya has been a rising star in East Africa. It offered a pleasant opportunity for the AFAM community of scholars and practitioners to gather and expand our conversation of managing and leading organizations in Africa, illuminated by the experiences of Kenya's stories of recent developments. This was supported by the superb hospitality of the Kenyan people. Along with the intellectually invigorating discussions, the conference organized excursions to local business entities as well as some fun times to enjoy Nairobi's vibe, including visits to the city and to appreciate nature, either at the Nairobi National Park (the only national park located within the boundaries of a city) or further afield at one of the other game-filled parks around the country. The conference took place between 5 and 10 January 2016, a time of the year most suited for visiting different parts of the country. The Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, one of the busiest in Africa, provides frequent links with the rest of the continent, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Within Kenya, travel by air and road is quite comfortable.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE: THE FIVE TRACKS

The conference was organized into five tracks as follows:

- Track 1: Entrepreneurship and Small Business, chaired by Dr Benson Honig
- Track 2: Organization Behavior and Human Resource Management, chaired by Dr Jenny Hoobler
- Track 3: Public Policy, Administration of Government, and Non-Government Organizations, chaired by Dr Tarek Hatem
- Track 4: Strategy and International Management, chaired by Dr Amon Chizema
- Track 5: General Management, chaired by Dr Akhentoolove Corbin.

The Professional Development Workshop (PDW/Caucus) and the Doctoral and Junior Faculty Development Consortium were chaired by Dr Constant Beugre and Dr David Zoogah, respectively.

In accordance with the theme of the conference, '*Managing Africa's Future: Prospects and Challenges*', we had quite a number of conceptual and empirical papers, symposia, professional development workshops, a doctoral and junior faculty consortium, and discussions on topics that engaged with how management of organizations and knowledge could be harnessed to propel Africa's future and prospects.

The conference began with the Doctoral and Junior Faculty Development Consortium. This is an important part of AFAM's mission designed to offer the next generation of scholars not only feedback from leading management scholars and practitioners from around the world but also an opportunity to present their work, engaging in scholarly dialogue and embedding communities of academic practice in the continent of Africa.

The five tracks were chosen to enable conference participants – scholars and practitioners – to explore, interrogate, problematize and engage in conversations covering a wide range of management and organizational scholarship and practice in and about Africa. The papers drew on theories from different management disciplines as well as other relevant theoretical frameworks. Though not exhaustive, we had suggested to potential presenters and delegates that some of the following questions would be worth considering in their papers and during discussions:

- What type of management theories, philosophies and concepts have helped to contribute to or hinder an Africa rising?
- How can postcolonial theories provide insight into the transformation of management and administrative systems inherited from colonialism?
- How are some of the root causes of challenges to organizations in Africa being tackled through management and organizational research and engagement?
- What does good management and leadership look like in organizations in Africa?
- How might indigenous approaches to management benefit African managers and organizations?
- What human resource management strategies are needed to build the skills and knowledge of an African labor force?
- What management challenges face organizations in Africa as it tries to harness and build on the expanding workforce towards sustainable and inclusive growth?

- How do organizations nurture Africa's young growing workforce with relevant training and development?
- What are some of the examples of best management practices in African organizations?
- Do Africa's diverse cultures, languages and ethnicities present opportunities or challenges for managing and developing capable institutions?
- Does the recent arrival of China, alongside the existence of the West's historical presence on the African continent present particular management challenges?
- What does sustainability mean within the African Renaissance phenomenon?
- How do emergent technologies, such as mobile banking and mobile-based applications enhance marketing channels and business activities?
- With the growing importance of natural resources such as new energy finds, how can new entrepreneurial efforts enhance local development?
- What are best practices in governance in public, government and non-profit organizations? And how can we promote transparency, accountability and institutional effectiveness in African enterprises?
- What could be some measures/solutions that could help public organizations in Africa improve on issues like administrative development and reforms, and meet complexity, manage crises and reduce corruption?
- How do preparing future managers and leaders in African institutions elicit increasing importance of public service education?
- How do strategic management theories of the firm (e.g. transaction cost economies, the resource based view, the institutional view, competitive strategy and dynamics, etc.) apply to the African context? What differences in the African context alter these theoretical models and how can they be used to improve firm outcomes?

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Out of the 171 faculty members and students who applied to attend the conference, 153 from 24 countries attended, including from Australia (4), Barbados (1), Botswana (2), Canada (3), Côte d'Ivoire (1), Denmark (2), Egypt (4), Ethiopia (1), Finland (2), Germany (2), Ghana (5), Kenya (43), Nigeria (2), Norway (1), Portugal (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Singapore (1), South Africa (22), Sweden (2), Tanzania (7), Uganda (7), the United Kingdom (11), the United States (26) and Zambia (1). Seventy-three papers were presented at the conference across the five tracks. There were six professional development workshops, and four symposiums.

We had to be very meticulous about choosing the track chairs, and managed to choose productive scholars who are prominent in their respective areas of specialization and strong/active in research. Further, we had to constantly follow up on their progress, from distributing papers to reviewers to collecting the reviews and making acceptance or rejection decisions, preparing and sending acceptance or rejection letters to applicants, and recommending the best paper for each track to be considered for publication in the *Africa Journal of Management*. We then had to organize and group accepted papers into coherent sessions and assign chairs different sessions. We had to make last minute adjustments to the program because some authors and chairs withdrew at the last minute due to security travel bans or lack of travel funding. Track chairs monitored the flow of sessions during the conference, and

collected evaluations for each session during the conference. These evaluations provided AFAM with useful feedback from participants. They also captured suggestions to improve future conferences.

Tea and coffee breaks were provided between sessions and lunch was served in the spacious Strathmore Business School MAASAI MARA CAFÉ. To enjoy the spirit of Nairobi, we provided participants with a link to organize safari visits. Also, AFAM selected three hotels, and provided other accommodation options very close to Strathmore Business School. The proximity of the hotels gave participants the opportunity to network and engage in activities outside the main conference program.

LAUNCH OF THE AJOM-GIZ SPECIAL ISSUE: MANAGING IN AN INTEGRATING EAST AFRICA

At the beginning of the AFAM 2016 Conference, the first Special Issue of the *Africa Journal of Management*, (AJOM), jointly produced with GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH), titled *Managing in an Integrating East Africa* and co-edited by Kiggundu and Walter (2015) was launched. For the launch and publication of the Special Issue, AJOM partnered with the East African Community (EAC) German Cooperation Program ‘Support to the EAC Integrating Process’, which is implemented by GIZ, referred to as GIZ/EAC. The main objective of the Special Issue was to advance management scholarship and practice in Africa and globally by undertaking quality research on regional integration. The joint AJOM-GIZ project was aimed at providing evidence-based knowledge about strategies business leaders use to deal with the opportunities and challenges of managing within the changing business environment in the context of deeper regional integration in the EAC. We wanted to capture the twin objectives of advancing management scholarship and learning more about regional economic management in Africa. Specifically, we wanted to improve our understanding of what the integration process means for practising managers in the private sector, and how companies, both local and international, deal with integration both operationally and strategically. In all, three research papers and 13 managers’ stories were published in the Special Issue. The managers represent all EAC member states (except Burundi), and local and multinational corporations, across different business sectors (see Kiggundu & Walter, 2015). Collaboration between AJOM and GIZ/EAC regarding deeper integration in East Africa is ongoing.

MODALITIES OF WORKING TOGETHER LONG DISTANCE

As the program co-chairs for the 2016 AFAM Conference, who are committed to the development of academic excellence in Africa, we gave much thought to how our purpose, ‘*Advancing Africa through Management Knowledge and Research*’ could reflect our mission. We thus included ideas in our five tracks and sessions, which would support our mission, such as evaluation of entrepreneurship education in Africa; the role of accreditation in African higher education; leadership development in Africa; developing African scholarship; career challenges and development in Africa, and so forth, all of. These ideas contributed to discussions on a wide-ranging spectrum of theoretical perspectives, methods and applications, further examining the theme and topics of the conference.

We live and work in Cairo and Cape Town, respectively. Working together over a long distance was a great challenge to us, as well as to the executive and local organizing committees at the SBS. However, being blessed with technology, we were able to communicate frequently, using email and various social media including Viber, Skype and WhatsApp. Fortunately, there is no time difference between our two cities. This made it easier and more convenient for us to call and chat at any time, day or night, about so many issues.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS AND AWARDS

Table 1 provides a summary of the winning papers for each of the four out of five tracks. It is interesting to note that the winners came from different continents, including Africa. The topics cover different areas of management scholarship in accordance with the conference tracks, ranging from social entrepreneurship in Kenya to workforce differentiation in Australia. Some of the winners are African graduate students or junior faculty members ... a sign of promise for the future advancement of management scholarship in Africa.

Our time together included experiential learning visits in Nairobi. We had three experiential trips to Equity Bank, Guango Dairy Limited, Kazuri Beads and the iHub – Nairobi's Innovation Hub for technology community. Also, we encouraged

Table 1. 2016 AFAM conference best papers.

Track	Authors and affiliations	Title of the paper
1. Entrepreneurship & Small Business	Christian Busch & Harry Markerma; London School of Economics and Political Science, UK	How and why do social entrepreneurs in low-income contexts develop networks to perform: A comparative study of social ventures in Kenya
2. Organizational Behavior & HRM	Samuel Eyamu, University of Melbourne, Australia	Workforce differentiation: When does it fit in African context?
3. Public Policy, Administration of Government & Non-government Organizations	NA	NA
4. Strategy & International Management	James P. Walsh, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan and Thomas Donalson, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, USA	A theory of business: Autochthonous or universal?
5. General Management	Matovu Augustine, Richard Akisimire, Ernest Abaho & Rachael Mirembe, Makerere University Business School, Uganda	Customer satisfaction in retail banks: Does service quality and electronic banking adoption matter? Evidence from a developing country

Source: AFAM 2016 Conference: www.africaacademyofmanagement.org

participants to explore Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. Nairobi has very attractive areas to see including the National Park, Giraffe Center, and shops with unique Africa artifacts. It was a bonus that SBS is located close to the Nairobi city center with great connections and relationships with business and industry in Kenya. SBS facilitated and organized truly inspiring experiential tours involving various organizations in Kenya. The experiential tours offered AFAM delegates the opportunity to see, first hand, management practices in organizations in Kenya and learn about what was making them successful or not. These experiences provided delegates practical learning opportunities about the challenges, obstacles and barriers that managers in these organizations were facing.

AFRICA ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The purpose of the Emerald Africa Academy of Management Trailblazer Award is to recognize a scholar who has taken a leadership role in the promotion and advancement of scholarship and/or teaching on management in Africa. Nominees should have distinguished themselves not only in making a significant contribution to organizational phenomena in Africa using scientific methods but also in the development and improvement of research and teaching of management in organizations in Africa. Actions that may indicate 'trailblazing' behavior include exemplary research contributions to knowledge about management issues in Africa, moving forward a content-related journal or scholarly series or advancing management education through an innovative, novel intervention.

The first Trailblazer Award was awarded to Professor Moses N. Kiggundu in 2011. At the AFAM 2016 Conference, we were proud to announce the 2016 Trailblazer award winner: Professor Michael Frese. Professor Frese is professor of psychology at Leuphana University of Lueneburg and professor and head of the department of management and organization at both the NUS Business School (National University of Singapore) and the Institute of Corporate Development (ICD) at Leuphana University of Lueneburg. In addition, Professor Frese is a Fellow of the Academy of Management and a member of the *Africa Journal of Management* (AJOM) Editorial Review Board. He has published over 140 peer reviewed articles and nearly 30 books during the past 40 years.

Professor Frese has taken a leadership role in the promotion and advancement of scholarship and/or teaching on management in Africa, by way of high quality publications, teaching and supervision of African doctoral students, serving as visiting professor, mentoring and publishing with junior African emerging and promising scholars, mobilizing resources, and advising heads and deans of emerging African business schools. He has worked in Africa over long periods of time, in several African countries and institutions, dealing with topics such as entrepreneurship, the informal sector and family-owned firms, not then considered part of mainstream management scholarship in Africa. For details of his acceptance speech, see Frese (2016).

LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE ... FOR FUTURE PROGRAM CHAIRS

Organizing the conference was a huge project and responsibility that needed collaboration between the co-chairs as well as the entire program committee, the local organizing committee and members of the AFAM Executive Committee. Achieving our goals

was not easy; it needed a lot of work, tackling endless details, and responding to seemingly never-ending special requests and changes of time plans and schedules. The African proverb that a thumb on its own cannot pick up a grain is very true indeed, since the other fingers are also needed. A team therefore with the right focus and spirit will always triumph. In utilizing all the available technology, it is possible to set clear deadlines and requests, and keep up a great flow of communication to ensure these are met, despite the fact that some things could be lost in translation and some team members perhaps not always appreciate the urgency of deadlines and requests.

VOTE OF THANKS FOR THOSE WHO HELPED ON THE WAY

It is indeed an honor, and it has been our real joy to be selected and to serve as the program co-chairs for our 2016 Africa Academy of Management Conference.

As the program co-chairs, we are truly thankful to everyone who came and actively participated in the conference. We can tell that every AFAM member is committed to helping keep this association going strong, and it's really inspiring to see.

Therefore, we would like first to thank all the organizers of this very exciting and fruitful conference, especially the chair and members of the local organizing committee. We reaped the fruits of all our hard work together! Special thanks go to the following program committee members: Dr Moses Acquaaah, Dr Eileen Kwesiga, Dr Judy Muthuri and Dr Constant Beugre. And we would like to thank all AFAM Executive Committee (or, more accurately, Family) members. Further, we would like to thank all the track chairs for being part of the AFAM family. Last but not least, it is our honor to thank our sponsors.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Elham K Metwally is an adjunct assistant professor in the School of Business at the American University in Cairo. She earned her doctorate of business administration degree from Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands, and her dissertation explored 'The effect of managing change through information technology to achieving strategic competitiveness for private banks in Egypt'. She earned her MBA and her bachelor degree in economics from the American University in Cairo. Elham is a founding member of the Africa Academy of Management, an affiliate of the Academy of Management, and was a co-chair of the Africa Academy of Management 2016 Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. She serves on the Editorial Review Board of the *Africa Journal of Management*, and she is a member of the Academy of Management in the USA, the European Academy of Management (EURAM), the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM), the Middle East Council for Small Business & Entrepreneurship (MCSBE), and Holland Alumni Network in the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC). She is an active participant in the Academy of Management annual conferences. She has several publications and her research and teaching interests include strategic management, organizational behavior, human resources management, organizational development, banking, entrepreneurship and small businesses. Her current research interests include research on leadership effectiveness, motivation and culture in Africa, diversity management, informal settlements and human resources management in North Africa. She has published a number chapters in books and a book review, and has authored and co-authored several articles that appear in a number of journals and books, including the *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, *Journal of International Finance and Economics*, the *International Journal of Strategic Management*, among others. Elham has more than a dozen years of experience in the realm of banking, namely in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), as well as around twenty years

extensive managerial experience in an educational setting working as the director of scholarships at the American University in Cairo.

Dr Nceku Nyathi is a senior lecturer at the Allan Gray Centre for Values Based Leadership at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business. With a pedigree in organizational studies and leadership theory, he has a deep interest in the role of values in transforming organizations on the African continent and around the world. He is a founding executive membership chair of the Africa Academy of Management (AFAM) and was a co-chair of the AFAM 2016 conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Nceku is an associate editor of the journal *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* and a member of the editorial board of the *Africa Journal of Management*. He is also a regular participant in Africa Academy of Management conferences. He recently qualified as an analytic network coach, enabling him to coach a new analytic process that fits in with the 21st century ‘network society’, offering depth, connectivity and breadth, bringing ethics together with the capacity to map networks and intervene in them to strategically influence change. His research interests are in critical approaches to leadership, postcolonial and anti-colonial organization theory, cross cultural management and inclusion, and how these constructs offer interventions that could contribute to new shifts in values and high performance. Nceku has been part of the team researching Africapitalism in Africa, exploring how the private sector, public sector and government could create collaborative partnerships that could create social wealth, innovation and development for Africa. Before joining the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, Nceku was lecturer in management learning at the Open University Business School in the UK. He has BSc (Hons) in International Agribusiness Management, an MA in Organization Studies from the University of Warwick and a PhD in Management from the University of Leicester in the UK.

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