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### Human resources management in multinational companies in Africa: a systematic literature review

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## Human resources management in multinational companies in Africa: a systematic literature review

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This study provides a systematic review of literature on the analytical perspectives and empirical research on human resource policy and practice in multinational companies (MNCs) in Africa. There is a need to 'take stock' of research publications on HRM in MNCs in Africa both intellectually and practically. The review identifies modes of analysis and thematic approaches in HRM literature on MNCs in Africa. The results provide support for particular clusters of research literature. These pertain to interests and motivations of MNCs, comparative political economy and institutional theory, labour market and HRM modes of analysis, cultural paradigms of indigenous management thought and clusters of HRM practice research. Areas for further research are identified.

**Keywords:** Africa; human resource development; human resource management; modes of analysis; multinational companies

### Context and area of study

This article is submitted for a special issue (SI) of the *International Journal of Human Resource Management (IJHRM)* on HRM in multinational companies (MNCs) in Africa. In the context of increased globalization of capital, information technology and communications, and labour, there is as growing body of literature aimed at determining the relationship between foreign direct investment (FDI) decisions by MNCs and HRM and HRD policy choices and implementation. This further raises the question of the relationship between FDI and these choices. 'Freer trade and freer investment and the resulting intensification of global competition call for a growing strategic control of MNCs, managing and co-ordinating the 'controlled variety' across different geographical locations' (Doz and Prahalad 1986, p. 55). Whilst industry and firm globalization have highlighted the question of centrally planned and co-ordinated strategic actions, the contextual realities of intensified global competition have required increased adaptation and responsiveness to local market, regulatory and cultural conditions according to Doz and Prahalad (1986, pp. 55–56).

In the African context, there is a big increase in the past decade of publications in high impact journals on HRM in Africa (Kamoche, Chizema, Mellahi and Newenham-Kahindi 2012). This article focuses more specifically on a literature study of HRM in MNCs in Africa, in terms of intellectual and practical contributions to HRM practice. With rapidly growing trade and investment between Africa and other emerging markets including India and China, the aim of this article is to provide a systematic review of literature on HRM policy and practice in MNCs in Africa in theoretical and practical terms. There are two broad categories of MNCs in Africa, first, those which are foreign MNCs which invest in local economies and state enterprises; for example, there were more than 800 Chinese

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companies in Africa in 2007 (Schneidman 2007), increasing to an estimated 2372 in 2013 (MOFCOM 2013); and second, those emerging market MNCs from Africa itself.

This analysis provides an identification and assessment of literature themes on both theoretical and practice-oriented literature. Where evidence is available, comparisons between local and foreign MNCs are made in respect of HRM practices. The context of growth of foreign and African MNCs in Africa is important in evaluating the background for their HRM policies and business practices in Africa (Shelley 2004; Luiz 2006).

Much of the contemporary assessments of MNCs and international investment in Africa are published in analyses in *The Economist*, *Wall Street Journal*, *China Security* and reports of specialist centres such as the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. However, there is a burgeoning intellectual literature with evidence-based academic treatises in an increasing number of journals. These journals include: *African Affairs*, *African Studies Review*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of African Business*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, *the International Journal of Business and Management*, *the International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Developing Societies* and *South African Labour Bulletin*.

It is posited that over the past decade most of this literature, though by no means all, has focused on the largest growth and investment relationship namely an 'Afro-Asian nexus' and more particularly that between China and Africa, and the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (SA). Over the past decade and longer, International HRM research in MNCs in Africa has tended to focus more on these countries especially China and less on HRM in European and US MNCs. This aspect is discussed further in the Findings section. In the context of globalization and the changing HR role of MNCs in emerging markets, this article focuses on identifying trends and future research opportunities from the HRM and HRD literature on MNCs in Africa, rather than on a wider body of publication on the general area of HRM in Africa.

## Methodology

This literature review aims at (1) identifying broad meta-analytical approaches, the findings of which are summarized in **Table 1**, and (2) common HRM theme clusters summarized in **Table 2**. The findings are discussed in detail in further sections of this article. A systematic literature review rather than a conventional review of specific HR policy and practices is made to provide a literature background for the SI as mentioned in the previous section. **Table 3** shows the number of search results using four search engines for six key words/phrases. A comments section is included in the table and footnotes referring to limitations of this search process.

By definition, this is an overview study rather than a literature review of one research question, problem or topic. A broad keyword search was conducted with focus also on SI publications. The review used the following data sources: *Science Direct* (which yielded 66 results using a key word search), plus *Google Scholar* and *Emerald Journal*, *Routledge Taylor & Francis*, and *Sage* publication searches. A number of search filters were applied; first, key word criteria using the following words: Africa, MNCs, HRM, HRD in MNCs in Africa and emerging markets.

It was, however, found that the above research search engines had limitations in not identifying a fully comprehensive list of publications on the topic and are dependent on variations in how key words or phrases are put. Therefore, a further search was made of known journals which were not identified in these search engines and which publish work

Table 1. Three analytical perspectives on multinational firms in African markets.

Theoretical approach	Study reference	Findings
1. Interests and motivations for MNC investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aulakh (2007), Cheah et al. (2014), Frynas and Paulo (2007)</li> <li>– Wei (2013), Zhang et al. (2013) and Farrell et al. (2006)</li> <li>– Gugler (2008)</li> <li>– Sautman and Hairong (2007), Bartels et al. (2009), French (2006), Xinhua (2009), and Anshan (2007).</li> <li>– IMF (Source: <i>The Economist</i> November 2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Primary resources and commodities driven</li> <li>– Access to natural resources, market size, potential for additional commercial ventures. Motivations similar for Chinese, Indian and Western MNCs</li> <li>– Four motivations: market seeking, resource seeking, strategic asset seeking and efficiency seeking</li> <li>– Economic co-operation and mutual gains; social and infrastructure development including education and public health</li> <li>– Stable purposeful policy making, improved governance and control of public finance, functioning legal institutions</li> <li>– Regulatory context and institutions such as collective bargaining, labour courts are important. Historical institutionalist perspective highlights differences between forms of capitalism, pluralism</li> <li>– Diversity rather than homogeneity a feature of markets in Africa; static conservatism a critique of the institutional paradigm</li> <li>– Importance of firm level behaviour, decision choices and agency theory, dynamic change</li> <li>– Critique of institutional paradigm, labour process, exploratory study methods</li> </ul>
2. Comparative political economy and institutional analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Agbola (2013), Hancke et al. (2007), Hall and Soskice (2001), Streeck (2009, 2011), Wood et al. (2014), Thelen (2001)</li> <li>– Bosch et al. (2010), Lane and Myant (2007)</li> <li>– Goyer (2011), Frynas and Paulo (2007), Kelly and Frege (2004)</li> <li>– Lane and Wood (2009), Pontusson (2005), Thompson and Vincent (2010),</li> <li>– Buckley et al. (2007), Jackson et al. (2013)</li> <li>– Corkin and Naidu (2008), Hamlin and Smardzich (2005), Power and Mohan (2008), Power (2008), Sautman and Hairong (2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Relevance of cultural proximity/similarities; theory of MNC firm critique, competing schools of thought</li> <li>– Adverse impacts of MNC investments in Africa, neo-conservative MNCs and employment, and wage levels, precarious, non-standard work, effects of governance models, intensification of local conflicts and corruption</li> </ul>
3. Labour market and HR perspectives	Adisu et al. (2010), Alden (2005), Akorsu and Cooke (2011), Bhorat (2007), Hanson (2008), Jain et al. (1998), Kaplinsky et al. (2007), Mogalakwe (2008)	

Table 2. Summary of HR research themes in MNCs in Africa.

<i>Research theme</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
1. Business and HR models in MNCs in Africa	Case study research, semi-structured interviews, secondary data	Jain et al. (1998), Klein and Wocke (2007), Lawler et al. (2008), Wocke et al. (2007), Horwitz (2012), Jackson et al. (2013), Contessi and El-Ghuzi (2010)
2. The notion of an Afro-Asian nexus	Primary and secondary data, qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews, and firm-level case study research	Jackson et al. (2013), Horwitz et al. (2002, 2006), Horwitz (2012)
3. Convergence, divergence, 'cross-vergence', hybridization, and diffusion of HR and knowledge in MNCs.	Critical theory analysis, secondary data and case study research	Azolukwam and Perkins (2009), Cheah et al. (2014), Giese and Theil (2012), Horwitz and Mellahi (2009), Horwitz et al. (2006), Kamoché et al. (2004), Kamoché (2011), Kamoché et al. (2012), Kamoché and Newenham-Kahindi et al. (2013), Mannan et al. (2009), Sartorius et al. (2011), Wood and Brewster (2007), April and Shockley (2007), Booyens (2007), Mbigi (2000), Jackson et al. (2013), Jackson (2004), Kamoché (2013), Kamoché et al. (2004), Horwitz and Jain (2011), Human (2005), Jain et al. (2012), Margaliso (2001), Wells (2003)
4. Indigenous thought systems, diversity policy and practice, employment equity and discrimination	Comparative analysis, theory development, case evidence research	Mannan et al. (2009), Magoola and Horwitz (2010), Newenham-Kahindi (2011), Lawler et al. (2008)
5. Specific HRM and employment practices:	Case study data, employee and management questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews and other qualitative methods.	Agbola (2013), Harvey et al. (2002), Horwitz (2013), Kamoché (2013), Kamoché et al. (2004), Kraak, (2004), Lorentzen (2005), Nafukho (2013, 2010), Lorentzen (2005), Newenham-Kahindi et al. (2013), Nyerere and Friso (2013), Onguko et al. (2013), Nzepa and Jackson (2004), Sydhagen and Cunningham (2007).
– Performance management	Triangulated research methodologies – qualitative and survey data, secondary data	Compagnon and Alejandro (2013), Geren (2010), Wood et al. (2011), Wood and Brewster (2007).
6. Decent work and fair labour practices	Critical analyses, labour process critique, employer and government survey data, firm level case study data	

Table 3. Papers according to key word search and search engines.

Keywords	Results				Comments
	Science direct	Google scholar	Sage journals	Emerald journals	
HRM in Africa	437	12,900	302	339 articles, 30 books, 1 case study	1. Omitting 'MNC' and 'Multinational Company' or 'Multinational Enterprise' 2. Over 60% had nothing to do with fields of HRM, IHRM or related areas 3. Some consistency between three-fourth of above searches
HRD in Africa	69,281	2 million	26,476	4022 articles, 750 books, 26 case studies	1. Search construct and findings range too broad for research topic 2. Science Direct search is done of 'All disciplines' 3. Too broad dealing with national HRD policy, local government and any article with word 'development'
HRD in Africa	200 journal articles, 49 books	9400	205	154 articles, 4 books	1. Search construct and findings range too broad to be useful 2. Some consistency between three-fourth of search engines
HRM in MNCs in Africa	67 journal articles, 7 books	3900	43	46 articles, 6 books, 2 case studies	Good consistency in three-fourth of searchers
MNC HRM in Africa	63 articles, 3 books	3950	26	45 articles, 7 books	Good consistency in three-fourth of searches
HRD in MNCs	4 articles, 1 book	1040	14	12 articles	Consistency in Africa three-fourth of searches

1. Search engines results show an overlap of articles i.e. same article result from different key word searches and in different search engines.
2. Google Scholar proved consistently too broad on all six key words/phrases; this being the case in only 1–2 key words in the other three search engines.
3. In many results the reference title was not specifically about MNCs in Africa but might have referred to this in the article text.
4. As mentioned in the Methodology section it was considered necessary to consult further searches in addition to these search engines given the broad results from search engines.

on MNCs, HRM, HRD and FDI in Africa. These were searched over a 12-year period. In addition to the above-mentioned journals such as *IJHRM*, the following regularly publish work on this theme: *African Affairs*, *Development Policy Review*, *European Journal of Training and Development*, *Journal of African Business Studies*, *Review of African Political Economy*, *South African Journal of Business Management*, *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *Third World Quarterly* and *World Economy*.

Second, a time frame was adopted for journal special editions, i.e. since 2000, applying the following key words to search for article titles on HRM, MNCs, employment relations and business in Africa. The following were identified: *African Political Economy* (2008), *The IJHRM* (2012), *Employee Relations* (2008), *Journal of Management Policy and Practice* (2010), *Journal of World Business* (2011) and *European Journal of Training and Development* (2013). Although this time frame was used, the search provided evidence of relevant prior publications.

Third, a further search on calls for SI journal publications was made this time using the term emerging markets and MNCs though omitting the words Africa and, HRM and HRD. This revealed several SI publications and calls for papers of journals on emerging markets in general. These included *Journal of International Management* (2007) the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (2013), *Journal of International Business Studies* (2013), *Journal of World Business* (2011), *European Journal of Training and Development* (2010) publications, and paper call 2013), but only some revealed articles with the particular combination of key words HRM in MNCs in Africa. These publications tend to be either geographically wider in their reference to emerging markets or more specifically focused on a region such as Asia-Pacific or China.

Hence, this search although geographically focused on Africa conducted a wider literature review on emerging markets in general, to ascertain whether anything further on the main key words might emerge.

The following themes emerged and from the structure of this systematic review: interests and motivations of MNCs, critical discourse in the literature on MNC trade and investment in Africa, comparative political economy and institutional analysis considering HRM, HRD and labour market issues, effects of MNC HR policies, literature on the evolving indigenous thought systems and HR practice in MNCs, the notion of an Afro-Asian nexus in HRM focusing on MNCs, and perspectives on HRM diffusion in MNCs – the convergence–divergence–hybridization debate and research questions or propositions emanating from the identified themes. This is followed by particular literature clusters on HRM policy and practice such as performance management, labour market and HRM and consideration of HRD practices in MNCs. Research propositions or research questions are posited for these. Conclusions and future directions for research are discussed.

## Findings

### *Interests and motivations of MNCs*

One mode of analysis found is that of the interests and motivations of MNCs, especially Chinese MNCs in Africa, which are postulated as primarily resource driven given the continent's rich minerals, commodities and oil (Ping 2004; Frynas and Paulo 2007; Cheah, Mazouz, Yin and Wood 2014). Gugler's (2008) work identifies four such motivations: market seeking, resource seeking, strategic asset seeking and efficiency seeking. There is increasing evidence in the literature indicating that growth is not limited to commodity-rich countries, exclusively attributable neither to Chinese MNCs nor to government investment. An IMF study shows that the 8 of the 12 fastest growing economies in Africa

do not rely on natural resources. Together these economies grew more quickly than the group of oil producers (*The Economist*, 2 November 2013). This research attributes high growth to additional factors. These include stable and purposeful policy-making, steps taken to control public finances and inflation, public spending and better governance.

Further empirical research is on policy making aimed at improving the business environment and climate, including economic growth, trade policy, education and HR investment, trade liberalization, political stability, functioning and fair legal institutions and adherence to international agreements, which is more likely to attract MNCs and FDI (Morisset 2001) [see further detailed analysis of institutional approaches in a later section of this article]. This is similar to Wei (2013) who finds that interests of most Chinese MNCs and investors are not limited to natural resources, but include market size and potential for other commercial ventures in the value chain. This work as well as that of Zhang, Wei and Liu (2013), Lin and Farrell (2013) published in as SI of the *Journal of African Business* presents data which seeks to refute the theory of purely commodities-driven investment strategy by MNCs. These studies suggest that motivations for direct investment by Chinese and other MNCs are not as different as those of Western MNCs as some have posited (see also Ping 2004). Although China is the largest investor, Indian companies have also become significant investors in Africa. These MNCs include Bharti Enterprises, Essar, Tata Corporation and Karuturi Global. The latter employs some 5000 people in the world's biggest producer of cut flowers in Kenya. A further example is investment by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, India's largest oil exploration firm with a \$2.6 billion dollar investment in Mozambique's offshore gas field. Sautman and Hairong (2007) argue that motives tend to be associated with development and infrastructural enhancement, a perspective also discussed by Bartels, Alladina and Lederer (2009). Other findings show that co-operation between Asian and African countries increasingly includes educational, cultural, medical and public health support and training (Anshan 2007).

A further type of literature is that assessing the notion of trilateral South–South co-operation. This has assumed increased predominance in research on Afro-Indian and Brazilian trade and investment policy (Alden and Vieira 2005). Trade between Brazil and African countries has increased in 10 years in December 2012 from US\$ 4.2 billion to US \$27 billion; this is based on fostering South–South relationships for mutual export including manufactured goods from Brazil (Stolte 2012). Often the discourse on foreign MNC investment and operations in Africa is framed in largely positive terms such as 'putting Africans in the driving seat' (French 2006; Wallis 2010) or 'economic co-operation creating a win-win for both sides' (Xinhua 2009).

A further thread of literature pertaining to interests and motivations of MNCs and research evidence tends to focus on identifying phases of engagement and investment models (Alden 2005; Zweig and Jianhai 2005; Alden and Davies 2006; Konings 2007; Sautman and Hairong 2007; Adisu, Sharkey and Okoroafo 2010). This also relates to an area of study of paths for performance (Aulakh 2007) and a growing literature on emerging market MNC business models (Luiz 2006; Contessi and El-Ghuzuly 2010; Madhok and Marques 2013). However, there is a paucity of such empirical work on African MNCs (Luiz 2006; Klein and Wocke 2007; Wocke, Bendixen and Rijamampianina 2007) and firm-level comparative strategic advantages, business models and HR policies and practices (Horwitz 2012).

The latter three works provide empirical data on HRM practice in emerging South African MNCs. Another study by Grzeschke and Moehring (2004) also investigated HRM practices in South African and Western MNCs in southern Africa. In both external MNCs

and emerging local multinational firms, HR practitioners considered the most important workplace challenges as performance improvement, employment equity, training and development, and managing trade union expectations. The next section deals with critical perspectives in the literature on trade and investment and MNC policy and practices.

From the above analysis, further research is needed on the factors or criteria influencing decisions on MNCs to invest in Africa, and second on African MNCs decisions to invest abroad; including the research question why do African MNCs invest in certain markets and not others? Agbola's work for example raises the question as to whether human capital issues constrain or enable impactful FDI in African countries such as Ghana.

A second question for further research given the diversity of African political economies is that of corporate governance, including the role of MNC Boards and the relationship between HRM and corporate social responsibility in MNCs in Africa. A related mode of enquiry links evidence on corporate governance and social responsibility issues where the presence of MNCs has seen violent conflict between copper mine management and local workers in Zambia. More controversial is an association of MNCs with rogue regimes effectively propping some of these up (Adisu et al. 2010), for example Chinese investment and trade with Zimbabwe. But here too there is contrasting evidence, with others (Schneidman 2007) citing evidence of positive social responsibility initiatives arising from MNC investment in Africa with examples such as programmes to address HIV/AIDS in SA and teacher training in partnership with government in Equatorial Guinea. Generally, however, how MNCs in Africa deal with corporate governance in their HR policies and practices is under-researched (Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbechie and Omao 2006).

### *Research proposition*

A SI of *the Journal of International Management* was published in 2007 on emerging market multinational firms (see, for example on SA – Klein and Wocke, pp. 319–337). Evidence from the above research finds that contemporary motives are primarily market and resource driven and may be insensitive to and flout employee and property rights (Cheah et al. 2014). From this perspective rather than past forms of politically motivated imperialist goals, these economic motives may be considered as 'neo-colonial' or a new form of 'colonialism' perpetuating under development in developing countries (Corkin and Naidu 2008). This new form of 'colonialism' in emerging markets is associated with new forms of economic resource and social exploitation based on commodity and energy needs of high economic growth-investing countries such as China, and less on HRD and employee rights in local labour markets. Power and Mohan (2008) argue that the global political economy with its growing demands for energy derived from commodities such as oil, coal and gas sees a competition for continuity of supply of these commodities, hence the expansion of the interests of MNCs from these markets into energy and commodity wealthy countries.

1. Human capital and HRM factors are not highly weighted criteria MNCs consider in investing in Africa.

### *Comparative political economy and institutional analysis – HR and labour market considerations*

In the context of HRM in MNCs in Africa, it appears that a social contract with MNCs is more of a socio-economic pact than an overtly politically motive or driven relationship. This is important from a HRM viewpoint as the economic rather than

political motives of foreign MNCs will likely have a different impact on HR decision choices. This 'pact' seeks export of Africa's commodities which other emerging markets require such as oil, but with a 'promise' of social and HRD, hence a different model from a traditional or pure commercial and instrumental exchange. Following a labour market mode of analysis referred to above, the literature on comparative political economy theory also offers a set of analytical frameworks. This includes institutional analysis of particular institutional contexts of different forms of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001; Hancke, Rhodes and Thatcher 2007; Wood, Dibben and Ogden 2013) and includes regulatory theory (see Boyer 2002 who has published extensive works on regulatory and institutional analysis; as well as historical institutionalists such as Thelen 2001; Streeck 2009, 2012).

Regulatory theory and institutional analysis are often used in industrial relations work (see, for example Boyer (2002), Wood and Lane (2011) and Wood and Flynas (2006)). Panel data for 22 countries over the period 1984–2000 indicates that countries that are small or lack natural resources can attract FDI by improving their institutions and policy environment (Asiedu 2006). These data assess effects of a decline in corruption, political stability, reliable legal institutions infrastructure improvements and better education on countries' ability to increase FDI. See also Flynas and Paulo (2007) who use a three-subject perspective, namely history, international relations and business studies to assess political–economic impacts of the commodities 'scramble'. Similarly, work by Buckley et al. (2007) using institutional framework analysis investigates determinants of Chinese outward FDI concluding that theory of the multinational firm itself is an important explanatory variable, and at a macro-societal level perceptions of political risk and cultural proximity to the host country are important. The idea of particular competencies of the MNC itself such as experience in managing large, complex markets and infrastructural development such as telecommunications is further found in the work of Gugler (2008). There is a growing body of literature assessing the determinants of this 'going-out' strategy of Chinese MNCs (Child and Rodriguez 2005; Hagiwara 2006; Morck, Yeung and Zhao 2007; Dunning and Lundan 2008; Cisse and Anthony 2013), as well as the construct of cultural proximity which is further assessed elsewhere in this article (Buckley et al. 2007; Jackson, Louw and Zhao 2013).

Institutional and regulatory theories have been criticized by labour process theorists such as Braverman (1974), Thompson and Vincent (2010) and Pontusson (2005). These critiques posit that the dynamic and complex nature of institutions and regulations is neglected in such analyses. In a critical vein, and sometimes using a labour process perspective, are evidence-based exploratory/investigative analyses in the South African Labour Bulletin, a journal with analyses focusing on labour movements and trade unions in Africa. It often publishes work on labour practices in MNCs and the effects of FDI on labour standards and minimum wages.

These analyses are augmented by work dealing with 'harmful impacts' such as the state of trade unions and employment losses affected by FDI in industries such as clothing, textiles and oil, and the impact of the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act published in the USA) on preferential access for certain African exports effects on employment and working conditions (Power 2008). This has been followed by trade and investment agreements with the BRICS countries.

A special edition of African Political Economy in 2008 published a series of theoretical and empirical work. Amongst these, reference to neo-conservative analyses points out ways in which labour and environmental laws are flouted by MNCs from China and India. This special edition presents contrasting evidence, suggesting what Power and Mohan (2008) and Corkin and Naidu (2008) believe are polarized competing schools of

thought, providing rigid and oversimplified perspectives. The first postulate is that India and China are the 'new colonial powers' (see also Hamm and Smardzich 2005), whose actions will perpetrate African underdevelopment. The second approach posits that their engagement with Africa is more benign and will ultimately enhance HR and other development needs of the continent. They argue that Africa's policy makers and development and institution building imperatives are key factors in critically evaluating the motives of foreign MNCs.

Labour market and HR effects of MNC investments are increasingly studied. Researchers such as Adisu et al. (2010), Bhorat (2007), Hanson (2008) and Kaplinsky, McCormack and Morris (2007) critically evaluate these issues. They found evidence of adverse impacts on wage levels, employment and skills transfer to the local population. An example is where such trade and investment squeeze local domestic markets and competition in external markets from export oriented MNCs with cheap products and pricing structures which adversely affect local competitiveness; this given the considerably larger production base and economies of scale of MNCs from countries such as China. A further variable in addition to these economies of scale and lower pricing is the associated lower production costs including the cost of labour (Tull 2006; and various articles in the South African Labour Bulletin for example). Using research case studies and other qualitative research methods, a second area of research considers impacts on local trade unions and domestic firms arising from the lack of skills transfer from foreign MNCs to the local work force, with little positive effects on HRD. These impacts have occurred in Ghana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Namibia and Angola (Alden 2005; Akorsu and Cooke 2011). Cheap imported and manufactured clothing and textiles have forced closure or take-over of local firms in SA. Adverse effects on employment standards have been found where long hours of work, pay below minimum regulatory wages and undercutting local pay rates have reduced employment with little pressure from the host country such as China and India (Akorsu and Cooke 2011). This forms a further argument regarding the relative strength or weakness of local institutions and regulatory regimes discussed earlier.

A detailed assessment of employment relations in Africa using multiple research methods was published in a special edition of *Employee Relations* edited by Wood (2008). Both thematic and country analyses are made, although only some of this work explicitly evaluates employment relations and HRM in a MNC context. The latter work includes that by Fashoyin (2008) on Zambia, Mogalakwe (2008) on a 'labour aristocracy' in Botswana and Simelane (2008) on Swaziland's textile industry. The SI critically assesses the general state of research on employment relations in Africa, considering the paucity of research a concern.

### *Research propositions*

Of particular relevance to HRM in emerging markets is the literature on varieties of capitalism given the diversity of these forms in emerging markets. The critique, however, of these approaches is the limited relevance on regional differences and a tendency to national archetypes and limited analysis at firm level (see, for example the research of Bosch, Mayhew and Schmitt 2010; Lane and Wood 2009; Hancke et al. 2007). The latter and Lane and Myant (2007) observe that emerging economies are not homogeneous and are indeed diverse and pluralist in their political economies and cultures. This perspective is similar to the work of Bosch et al. (2010, p. 137), Goyer (2011) and Kelly and Frege (2004, p. 183) who argue that actual workplace behaviour, behaviour change, choice or agency of actors within institutions is important. Further research regarding workplace employment relations is required since much of the literature on labour markets and

employment in African economies is macro-regulatory oriented such as the impacts of labour regulation and employment law. However, work place employment relations including case studies and comparative practice in MNCs are less well researched.

1. Although institutional and regulatory context are espoused as important variables in choice of HRM policies and practices by MNCs in Africa, there is a gap between espousal and practice in use.

Further research on the process dynamics of this 'gap' would be instructive particularly seeking a deeper understanding of organizational factors or intervening variables pertaining to the extent and nature of the gap between institutional regulation and workplace HRM practice.

### ***Indigenous thought systems and HR practice***

An enduring theme in African HRM literature is the appropriateness of Western management principles and practices (Mangaliso 2001; Jackson 2004; Human 2005; April and Shockley 2007; Booysen 2007; Jackson et al. 2013; Newenham-Kahindi, Kamoche, Chizema and Mellahi 2013). There are challenges to MNCs and local firms which adopt practices with little consideration to their suitability, relevance and impact (Kamoche, Debrah, Horwitz and Muuka 2004; Horwitz and Mellahi 2009, p. 464). African indigenous thought systems variously reflect high collectivism, group solidarity tendencies. Indigenous models of leadership and organization emphasize the notion of 'Ubuntu' – personal identity derived from the influences of the group as a collective or community phenomenon, team or group decision-making and interdependence, which struggle to assert in the face of a converging global business orthodoxy (Mbigi 2000; Mangaliso 2001; Jackson et al. 2013). These notions have similar precepts to the Confucian emphasis on family Guanxi networks/social capital and cohesion found in Chinese firms.

A growing body of qualitative research using semi-structured interviews and case research methods considers an epistemological shift away from the predominant Western management theories to alternative theories based on Asian and African perspectives in MNCs from these economies (Mangaliso 2001; Jackson 2004; Horwitz, Nkomo and Rajah 2004; Kamoche et al. 2004; April and Shockley 2007; Nkomo 2011; Jackson et al. 2013). The importance of collective solidarity is seen in the network of interrelationships, extended family and mutual obligations not dissimilar to the paternalism found in Chinese, African and Taiwanese MNCs. In the case of certain African MNCs, this results in a sense of communalism and traditionalism, which is not unlike the Confucian influence on East Asian MNC's culture. Some research uses mixed method approaches to assess Hofstede's cultural dimensions and impact on selection and recruitment, training and development, and performance management (Sartorius, Merino and Carmichael 2011).

A conceptual perspective within which an Afro-Asian context can be suitably framed is that posited by Jackson (2004, pp. 20–22) – a typology of western instrumentalism and African humanism and east Asian attributes as a useful contextual framework for a proposed Afro-Asian HRM typology. Values such as adherence to social obligations, collective trust, deference to rank and seniority, sanctity of reciprocity and good social and personal relations are relevant. African 'Ubuntu' or humanism may arguably reflect a conceptual proximity to Confucian humanism and Chinese Quanxi. But an unrealistic, idealized or indeed romanticized conception may not have significant empirical or managerial support. There is also a latent assumption of both homogeneity and unique distinctiveness, which obfuscates the reality of inter-regional, inter-country complexity

and inter-ethnic diversity. Wells (2003) notes differences between African and Asian MNCs in that their competencies are developed in countries that have distinct disadvantages due to erosion of natural resources, insufficient domestic investment in infrastructure, including physical and human capital. These include cultural heterogeneity or diversity as a source of mutually beneficial win-win cooperation, a polyocular vision with regard to what constitutes 'objective' truth, the mental connectedness the worker shares with group members, the idea that the individual assumes a relational existence and identity whose *raison d'être* is located within the community to which he/she belongs.

Just as the African notion of 'Ubuntu' is not widespread in parts of modern Africa, so too are the tenets of Confucianism not hegemonic in east Asia. Caution is, however, necessary in potentially confusing a desired future vision with current empirical reality. Several east-Asian countries are further along a transition continuum in respect of economic development and growth than most African countries. The socio-economic context of management therefore differs from that of African countries, themselves highly diverse and complex (Harvey 2002, and most of whom have high levels of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. At the same time, like east Asian countries, there is a high need to develop people (Harvey, Myers and Novicevic 2002; Kamoche et al. 2004). These contextual overlaps suggest avenues for further research.

### *Research questions*

A limitation of the literature on African indigenous thought systems is that it tends to be theoretical and somewhat normative with a paucity of evidence-based case research and large-scale survey evidence of its actual extent or otherwise. Arguably the construct of Ubuntu is limited to anecdotal case studies evident in individual or single firms and is not extensive. It is submitted that in practice neither MNC HRM practices are adopted without change nor are indigenous ones. An important contribution to further research pertains to the actual process of how both headquarters HR policy and practice and indigenous management are actually hybridized. Multi-method triangulated research would provide rich and potentially more generalizable data for obtaining a deeper understanding of how the process of hybridization occurs in practice – what is hybridized, how, where are key decisions made, what are the barriers to hybridization, which stakeholders are involved, how are conflicts and cultural differences dealt with and what are the outcomes at workplace and organizational levels?

Given the strong emphasis on Asian MNC investment over the past decade, the next section provides a more in-depth analysis of the notion of an 'Afro-Asian nexus' in HRM in MNCs in Africa.

### *The notion of an Afro-Asian HRM nexus*

Comparative research using both survey data and case study methods has been done on emerging market HRM and knowledge worker attraction and retention issues between east Asia and Africa (Horwitz, Kamoche and Chew 2002; Horwitz et al. 2006; Horwitz 2012; Jackson et al. 2013), developing the notion of an 'Afro-Asian nexus' in cross-cultural diffusion of HRM policy and practice and cross-cultural hybrid forms of HRM in certain Chinese and African MNCs. This analysis seeks to delve deeper than the much used convergence/divergence frameworks, positing that the latter's polar extremes do not reflect the integrative alternative of 'cross-vergence' (Ward, Pearson, Entrekin and Winzar 1999, pp. 466–473), hybridization (Mamman, Baydoum and Adeoye 2009; Sartorius et al.

2011) and institutional analysis. This results in a closer attention to process dynamics in the design and implementation of HRM and the allied concept of reverse diffusion. The literature on African MNCs have also seen South African firms increasingly investing and doing business in China (Horwitz 2012). Several of these such as SAB Miller have joint venture operations, investments and growing market share in China. This empirical work examined perspectives of 13 MNCs from SA in respect of variables considered important in labour and markets in China. These included how MNCs first interpret and understand cultural, human capital, regulatory factors and employment practices, before considering how they might adapt to or seek to influence them. Jackson et al. (2013) note the effects of reverse diffusion and 'cross vergence' of HRM policy and practice in this regard. The literature on diffusion of HR in MNCs in Africa is further discussed elsewhere in the article, but the little empirical work on this subject has limitations in terms of generalizability given the large case study rather than large-scale survey work done.

The cultural/institutional complexity of emerging markets precludes over-simplified analysis. Developing a six-factor typology of an 'Afro-Asia nexus in HRM', focusing on emerging market MNCs in the southern African context with particular reference to Asian influences, this article thematically explores emergent themes in HRM. The above literature critically evaluates evidence of the extent to which good HRM practice is converging on the continent with the influence of east Asian firms, indigenous thought systems and contextual factors, the diffusion of HRM practice, process implementation factors, diversity and contingency factors.

HR issues that have been identified in the emerging economy literature include the inappropriate use of foreign HRM policies and practices, burgeoning literature on use of expatriate skills, reliance on particularistic practices driven by local institutional and legislative regimes, nepotistic considerations, lack of transparency in often highly politicized decision-making, and a concern with procedural and transactional HRM rather than strategic issues. (Kamoche et al. 2004, pp. 1–2)

### *Research proposition*

The above analysis provides a qualitative research approach in seeking to fill a gap in the literature in respect of integrating both the importance of contextual variables and Afro-Asian comparative IHRM (Horwitz et al. 2006; Horwitz 2012). Consideration has to be given as to whether these practices are adopted 'as is', or with some modification, or comprehensively redesigned or 'recontextualized', with due consideration therefore of cross-vergence issues and hybridization (Mamman et al. 2009; Sartorius et al. 2011).

Further research is required on the need for integrative frameworks for effective cross-cultural diffusion, and adoption requires critical evaluation of variables key to implementation (Warner 2000). The growth of emerging market MNCs also poses the following research proposition:

1. The diffusion and adoption of HRM policy and practice by Asian MNCs in Africa reveal elements of convergence, cross-vergence and hybridization, though home country policies drive formulation.

### *Research perspectives on HRM and HRD practice diffusion in MNCs in Africa*

This volume finds that the bulk of this research over more than a decade has focused on Asian MNCs in Africa. There is a significant paucity of empirical research on HRM and HRD in European and US firms. In a recent book on '*Effective People Management in*

*Africa*' edited by Newenham-Kahindi et al. (2013), reference to European and US MNC HRM and HRD in Africa is limited to two of the eight chapters. The MNCs cited include Citibank and Miller beer (USA) now merged as SABMiller. Cultural studies of European MNCs in Africa have found a tendency for these firms to 'lump African countries together' as relatively similar (Jackson 2004), which has an effect on how adoption of HRM policies and practices occurs. There is a real paucity and certain 'shallowness' of the literature on both HRM and HRD in Western companies in Africa. European journals such as the *Journal of European Training and Development* have devoted special editions to HRD in Africa (Nafukho 2010).

During Apartheid, foreign US MNCs in SA such as Colgate Palmolive, Caltex (Texaco) and Johnson & Johnson were subject to the Sullivan Code for ethical corporate social responsibility and fair employment practices. These MNCs as well as European MNCs such as Unilever, Siemens, van Leer and oil MNCs such as BP and Shell have contributed positively to social responsibility and community development (Jackson 2004, p. 255) with 'progressive' HR policies and practices adapted to regional contexts. Lawler, Chen, Wu, Bae and Bai (2008) in a sample of 17 US MNCs with subsidiaries in Africa, Asia and Europe find considerable variety in host-country environments regarding factors associated with implementing high performance work practices. Jain, Lawler and Morishima (1998) also studied HR practices of multinationals in relation to institutional variable subsidiaries in host countries including an African case sample. A geocentric model of HRM is evident from most of these studies with centrally (headquarters) driven and co-ordinated HR policies and practices with adaptive implementation in global subsidiaries.

Similarly although certain European MNCs such as Barclays and HSBC banks disinvested from SA at the time, many of these have re-invested deploying good HR practice and creating employment. Barclays and other Western MNCs have increased their activities in Africa (Luiz 2006). MNC research on the degree of introduction of Western models of HRM in (East) Africa and their effectiveness has occurred (Kamoche 2000, 2011; Kamoche et al. 2004). Influence of French and other European MNCs such as Guinness Cameroon in Francophone Africa has been the subject of research, which found an adaptation of Western management techniques Nzepa and Jackson 2004), and also the important issue of HR as a process for exercising headquarters control by French MNCs in Nigeria (Huault 1996). The theme of indigenous versus Asian and Western practices is dealt with more fully elsewhere in this article.

This literature survey finds that national HRD policy and systems are more the subject of research (Kraak 2004; Lynham and Cunningham 2006; Sydhagen and Cunningham 2007; Wachira 2010; Arthur-Mensah and Alagaraja 2013), than the limited literature on empirical research of HRD policy and practice in both Asian and Western MNCs in Africa with some exceptions such as Lorentzen's (2005) research conference on HRD in Daimler Chrysler in SA.

Cheah et al. (2014) provide research data on the relationship between FDI in Africa from other emerging markets and HRM and skills development implications. This research found that determinants of investment by emerging market MNCs were not strongly associated with weak property rights and neither with the absence of an educated and highly skilled labour force. Rather, given a policy of importing expatriates from the home country in skilled, managerial and unskilled work, substituting for investment in the development and deployment of local labour, was quite common, for example in countries such as Zambia (Fashoyin 2008; Cheah et al. 2014, p. 27). This research concludes that the failure to train and develop local labour, lack of social engagement, understanding and

communication with local communities creates difficult choices for HRM and raises political and social risks and tensions. Further research in this regard considers factors in the balancing of human capital investments impact on economic growth (Harvey 2002; Harvey et al. 2002). Field work research in Ghana on the frictions of mutual equity expectations between Chinese employers and local labour has yielded insightful data of mutual perceptions and understandings, finding 'a sense of existential vulnerability, although particular for each group, that is shared by both parties' (Giese and Theil 2012, pp. 1–20).

A second perspective posits that it is not appropriate to generalize about emerging market MNCs, given that they not organizationally monolithic, and the complexity and diversity of their home cultures and institutions (Kamoche 2011; Cheah et al. 2014, p. 30). The latter research finds that it is particularly difficult to capture this complexity, given the wide-ranging issues on managing HRs in Africa. Multi-method research on Brazilian MNC policy and practice in Angola and Lusophone Africa has been found to be more closely integrated into local culture and society, given common language and cultural affinities (Ferreira 2009; Cheah et al. 2014). In Chinese MNCs in Africa, HR strategies may reflect a low wage, low skill and administrative model rather than a strategic and value adding one (Cheah et al. 2014, p. 22). These conclusions are consistent with Dibben et al. (2011), Luo and Tung (2007) and Farrell, Laboissiere and Rosenfeld (2006), who find that HR approaches in such firms are less concerned with issues of regulation, labour and trade union rights and institutions abroad or variations in skills capabilities, than in the acquisition of strategic assets and rather on decisions relating to relative market size and access to primary commodities.

Context perspectives have, therefore, become more important. Some studies suggest that whilst HRM policy and choices are to some extent influenced by local context, the relatively low interest in accessing and developing local skills is overshadowed by securing cheap labour and low wage rates (Kamoche 2011; Jackson et al. 2013; Cheah et al. 2014, p. 33). The capacity of emerging market MNCs to use labour substitutability strategies is with some variation, a characteristic of MNC HR policy in African countries. However, the research on the substitutability thesis is not immutable. Other researches in Kenya for example find this thesis to be a 'misconception' and that significant employment by Chinese firms occurs, albeit largely at the low and semi-skilled levels with Chinese expatriates being brought into managerial and specialized high skills work (Kamoche 2013). Research on adaptation and adjustment of expatriates with the assistance of cross-cultural training has been found to be positive in enhancing adjustment of Western Expatriates in Nigeria (Okpara and Kabongo 2011). However, as mentioned by Kamoche (2013), there is also evidence of a reluctance to transfer high-end knowledge and expertise to local employees, a practice historically comparable to MNCs where senior management positions have been occupied by expatriate staff from MNCs. This work together with case study research on knowledge appropriation in MNCs in Tanzania (Citibank and Standard Bank, SA) finds that HRM practices are legitimized through ethnocentric values (Kamoche and Newenham-Kahindi 2013). HRD in emerging markets in southern Africa has also been a focus of survey and secondary data research (Kraak 2004; Horwitz 2013), and a special edition of the *European Journal of Training and Development* (2013) which published a series of articles on capacity building through HRD and research in Africa (Nafukho 2013; Nyerere and Friso 2013; Onguko, Jepchumba and Gaceri 2013). Research tends to offer conflicting perspectives on the extent to which the effective diffusion and transfer of modern management systems and practices and knowledge and skills actually occur; with some taking a

positive view that local African employees benefit from the influence of management practices of MNCs (Dupasquier and Osakwe 2006).

There is a dearth of theoretical analyses of HRM in MNCs in Africa. An exception example is the research by Wood, Dibben, Stride and Webster (2011) on HRM in Mozambique, and the book 'HRM in Africa' edited by Kamoche et al. (2004). The latter work deals with HRM in both MNCs and other forms of enterprise, including state-run enterprises and the state itself as an employer in African countries. A second work is that by Terence Jackson who has published extensively on cross-cultural and diversity issues in Africa and a book 'Management and Change in Africa' (2004). A further work is the book 'Industrial Relations in Africa' edited by Wood and Brewster (2007). The first book on developing country HRM was edited by Budhwar and Debrah (2004). Taking both a country analysis and thematic research perspective, it includes chapters on African countries such as Algerian Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana, making reference to MNCs and HR practice.

A special edition of the *Journal of Management Policy and Practice* (2010) published a series of articles relating to specific issues in African business policy including consumer choice, employee commitment, multilateral trade agreements, e-commerce and relationship marketing. Some dealt with MNCs in Africa and HRM issues such as performance management and development (Magoola and Horwitz 2010), decent work in Kenya (Geren 2010), AGOA – multilateral trade agreements (Obuah 2010) and Africa's global economic integration (Shrestha, Smith and Evans 2010). Luiz's (2006) book *Managing Business in Africa* similarly deals with a range of business and strategic issues. This work includes case research on African MNCs such as MTN the telecommunications giant (Townsend and Luiz 2006), Barclays Bank in Africa (Mitchell and Luiz 2006) and HRM in Africa (Horwitz 2006). Further case research evaluates HR impacts of emerging market banks in Tanzania (Newenham-Kahindi 2011). Most recent is the book *Effective People Management in Africa* (2013) edited by Newenham-Kahindi, Kamoche, Chizema and Mellahi. This empirically based work evaluates trends, directions and HRM practice on both a country basis and then adopts a thematic approach to HRM, HRD and cultural issues in MNCs in Africa, making use of case study research evidence in MNCs. These works contain theoretical and empirical analyses.

Regarding a convergence–divergence perspective, using secondary data and semi-structured interviews, research on policy and legislation on localization, indigenization and employment equity in countries such as Zambia, Botswana and SA finds that these countries seek to impose targets and timetables on MNCs and local firms of a certain size to develop and promote local employees (Horwitz and Jain 2011; Jain et al. 2012). This exerts pressure on MNCs to adapt their HR policy and practice on diversity to local institutional and regulatory context. Case study research on the transfer and diffusion of HRM practices in MNCs in the banking sector in Tanzania finds that MNC HR policy and practice remains embedded in their home-country policies, given the often global agenda of MNCs (Newenham-Kahindi 2005; Newenham-Kahindi 2011). Survey and semi-structured interview research on performance management reveals variation in the level of sophistication of performance management systems in African MNCs (Mamman et al. 2009; Magoola and Horwitz 2010), reinforcing a tendency to transfer with some adaptation to local context performance management systems developed in the MNC's home country; this, however, without sufficiently considering hybridization or cross-convergence explanations. Mamman et al's work on performance management in MNCs in Nigeria, using a case research approach, found a largely polycentric and partially ethnocentric approach to transfer of performance systems. Rather than divergence or significant convergence, a degree of adaptation and accommodation occurs (Wocke et al.

2007; Horwitz and Mellahi 2009). Some studies find for example that Chinese MNCs are more compliant with national employment and environment laws in Africa than the critical literature suggests (Compagnon and Alejandro 2013).

### *Research question*

Studies by Jackson et al. (2013), Jackson (2004), Kamoche (2013), Mangaliso (2001) and Horwitz et al. (2002) consider cultural and cross-cultural and diversity paradigms as modes of analysis, comparing similarities and differences in Afro-Chinese culture (such as African 'Ubuntu' and Confucian 'Guanxi' constructs), which might act as intervening variables in the effective diffusion of HR policy and practice. Jackson et al.'s (2013) research on dependency and post-colonial theory and cultural 'cross-vergence' makes an important contribution to the cross-cultural paradigm and studies and their application to international HRM. This has some conceptual similarities to an integration–differentiation perspective posited by Wocke et al. (2007), but with a stronger emphasis on Chinese–African cultural dimensions more consistent with Kamoche (2013).

A research question posed in this regard is: How do mediating effects of cross-cultural variables and host regulatory differences affect HRM policy and practice similarly or differently (a) at MNC firm level and (b) comparatively between MNCs and home-country firms?

### **Future research and conclusions**

The contribution of this systematic literature review is to provide a background meta-study for this SI of the literature on the broad topic of HRM in MNCs in Africa. Hence it is not a literature review of one particular research topic, problem or area. Although not exhaustive, this article has provided a systematic review of relevant literature on HRM themes in MNCs in Africa and posed further research questions relating to the main findings. This review strongly concurs with Kamoche et al. (2012) who conclude that the research on HRM in MNCs in Africa should be reshaped, moving on from lamenting the inappropriateness of Western managerial paradigms and practices to how various forms of hybridization occur (e.g. Azolukwam and Perkins 2009). There is a certain sense of denial by the normative proponents of an African management paradigm in advocating a 'not-invented-here syndrome'.

Given the limitations of research engine findings previously mentioned, the broadened journal search methods used and data sources for this review are varied. Theoretical approaches and empirical work are outlined. Although growing, this review finds that whilst there is significant theoretical and critical analytical work, there is a paucity of empirical work beyond firm-level case study or small-scale quantitative research often by organization psychology researchers on specific HRM practices such as performance management, remuneration, career development and organizational commitment. This kind of research is more developed in SA than in other African countries, and is largely published in good regional peer-reviewed academic journals such as *the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *South African Journal of Labour Relations* and *South African Journal of Business Management*. This work rarely, however, provides wider comparative analyses between MNC firms or between MNCs and local firms.

As discussed in the section on institutional theory, the relevance of national institutional settings and social business systems is in analysing how MNCs structure their management and operations and how they adapt and change over time (Whitley 1992;

Hamm and Smadych 2005; Newenham-Kahindi 2005). As Jackson et al. (2013) argue 'Ultimately in Africa the impact of any research on HR development issues will be a factor in framing research questions' (p. 2530). Given the complexity and diversity of Africa, there is significant potential for comparative research between regions, countries and sectors including MNCs' HR practices and hybridization processes in different countries. Regions covered in more depth to date include SA, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania. There is opportunity for developing comparative HRM further in the African HRM context.

Further comparative research on how MNCs develop HRM policies and practices, their relative similarities and differences, the impact of home-country organizational culture, and control such as the question of central/head office influence and control on HRM policy and practice in their operations in Africa. Home-country managerial and leadership styles and their influence and adaptiveness in managing people in Africa are not well researched (Newenham-Kahindi et al. 2013). Mono-cultural versus cross-cultural teams and their dynamics of operation and effectiveness in Africa have also been posited as a research question (Jackson et al. 2013, p. 2530). A further area of research for which there is limited published work (e.g. the work of Klein and Wocke 2007; Wocke et al. 2007) relates to the alignment of business models and HRM strategies in MNCs in Africa and African MNCs operating abroad.

Given a shortage and brain drain of knowledge worker talent from Africa, MNC's HR strategies for attracting, developing and retaining talent in their African operations represent an important and potentially impactful research opportunity. In this context there is also a need to examine MNC HR strategies and responses to the potentially homogenizing effects of globalization, increased competition and effects of value adding versus cost competitive strategies and the HR implications of these. As discussed in this review, the particularism and 'local uniqueness' argument and of indigenous thought systems in Africa are unlikely to be immune to the effects of HR policies and strategies of MNCs. As previously discussed, research on how re-contextualization and hybridization of corporate-driven HR strategies and practices actually occur would make an instructive contribution academically and for HR practitioners in MNCs.

There is an important research contribution to be made by examining the impacts of new technologies on HRM in emerging markets such as Africa, the changing nature of the psychological contract as labour markets in Africa become increasingly segmented between standard and non-standard employment patterns, organizational and work commitment, workplace cooperation and employee engagement. Further research on the interface between corporate governance and HRM would also be an instructive area of study.

In this regard there is further scope for comparative analyses of firm-level learning and skills development strategies in MNCs versus local firms and sector studies. Whilst much has been written on national HRD policies, there is less empirical work at firm level of particular initiatives and strategies including this, which seek to establish an association between HRD initiatives and individual and firm-level performance improvement. Employee engagement, employment relations, new forms of compensation and reward and performance management in MNCs in Africa are potentially rich fields for further research.

Not surprisingly much of the contemporary research on MNCs in Africa is concentrated on the Africa-Asian nexus, given the high level of investment growth of China on this continent. Much research to date tends to be qualitative using case study, semi-structured interviews, employee and management focus group methods, or

theoretical analyses. There is a need for large-scale quantitative research using surveys of employers and employees, and preferably triangulated with qualitative research methods. This would provide a richer picture and enable better evidence-based generalization of findings and identification of HRM trends in multinational firms. Africa is an exciting and veritable rich social laboratory for intellectual entrepreneurs in the social and management sciences.

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