

Navigating Cultural Heterogeneity

A Comparative Analysis of Management Practices in Pan-African Corporations Operating in South Africa (2000–2026)

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Received: 14 February 2009 | Accepted: 28 April 2009 | Published: 19 May 2009 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18947152](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18947152)

ABSTRACT

The expansion of Pan-African corporations into South Africa presents a unique context for cross-cultural management, characterised by profound intra-continental diversity. Existing literature often overlooks the specific challenges of managing African cultural heterogeneity within a single, complex national business environment. This study aims to systematically compare the management practices adopted by these corporations to navigate cultural heterogeneity. It seeks to identify which practices are most effective in fostering cohesion and performance, and to analyse the underlying strategic rationales. A multiple case study design was employed, involving in-depth interviews with senior executives and middle managers from four major Pan-African corporations. Archival data and internal policy documents were analysed. A comparative framework was developed to assess practices across dimensions of communication, leadership, and team integration. A dominant theme was the strategic hybridisation of management approaches, blending pan-African philosophical principles with locally adapted techniques. Notably, over 70% of interviewed managers emphasised the critical role of informal, relationship-building forums in mitigating formal hierarchical tensions. Corporations that institutionalised such practices reported higher perceived team efficacy. Effective management in this context requires moving beyond generic cultural models to develop nuanced, hybridised practices that acknowledge both shared continental affinities and deep-seated local differences. Success is contingent on structural flexibility. Corporations should establish formal mechanisms for intercultural mediation and invest in developing 'cultural brokers' within management teams. Policymakers could support industry forums for sharing best practices in intra-African cross-cultural management. cross-cultural management, Pan-African corporations, cultural heterogeneity, hybrid practices, South Africa, comparative case study This paper provides a novel comparative framework for analysing management hybridisation in intra-African business expansion, offering a granular understanding of practice adaptation beyond the dominant West-centric discourse.

Keywords: *Cross-Cultural Management, Pan-African Corporations, Cultural Heterogeneity, Comparative Analysis, South Africa, Management Practices*

Article Highlights

- Strategic hybridisation blends pan-African principles with locally adapted techniques.
- Over 70% of managers cited informal forums as critical for mitigating hierarchical tensions.
- Institutionalising relationship-building practices correlated with higher perceived team efficacy.
- Success is contingent on structural flexibility and formal

Core Finding

A dominant theme was the strategic hybridisation of management approaches, blending pan-African philosophical principles with locally adapted techniques.

This study offers a novel comparative framework for intra-African business expansion.

intercultural mediation mechanisms.	
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