Book Reviews

Administering Management Development Institutions in Africa, Kami Rweg-asira, Published by Gower Publishing Co. Ltd 1988. Hardback £19,50, ISBN 0 566 05501, 112pp.

This is a well thought out book on how to administer management institutions in Africa. The book is based on the author's personal experience and interviews with senior and top level management in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The book is divided into six chapters, each focusing on distinct aspects or issues which are challenges to various people involved in management development institutions.

In the first chapter, the author examines some of the underlying assumptions in economic background and dependence on developed economic systems. This appears to be a serious underlying assumption because most African countries, like most Third World, countries engage into heavy borrowing and wasteful use of the borrowed funds. This is due to lack of internal consistent and well integrated plans and weaknesses in management and the implementation process. However, some economies have tried to live with this problems but not others. Some countries may not have access to aid although they may be good users of borrowed funds.

Another underlying assumption is deverse political ideologies. Here it is cited that dominant political ideology will determine the extent of social responsibility and accountability expected from the management development institutions.

Socio-economic environment is yet another underlying assumption. In Africa, diversity of religious beliefs does influence the attitude of executives towards their functions and responsibilities as well as the approaches they use.

Tribal ethnic values is another assumption. The author argues that different tribes have differing mental or conceptual predispositions towards business, training and further education. He cites the Ibo of Nigeria and Baganda of Uganda to be positively oriented towards education while the Maasai and Acholi are warlike and considered nomadic. In the latter case training and business may not be positively conceived.

The final assumption considered here is low technological environment. There is dependency on foreign ideologies which have strings attached. It is urged that technology transfer is haphazardly administered through management agreements and where research is supported there is insufficient resources in terms of

manpower and finance.

The essential phase of these assumptions is that when examining the problems of administering management development institutions one has to bear in mind that these assumptions are the basis upon which problems are built. These assumptions can assist in understanding the problems faced and how to resolve them. These assumptions seem to play correlated roles in understanding management development institutions in Africa.

In Chapter Two the author explains the practical problems in training, research and consultancy and attempts to offer solutions on how to deal with each problem.The problems discussed in the chapter include poor identification of needs examination leakages.For each of these problems, the author has also suggested possible ways of handling these problems. For instance, on pages 16 and 17 he has given a guide to task analysis and design of management training programmes.

Perhaps the other problems would be better understood or be of practical value if they were given guidelines. In this chapter the author has also discussed research obstacles and predicaments. These include absence of top management support, limited supportive services, lack of appropriate skills, lack of incentive and motivation and data problems and consultancy issues. He adequately analyses these problems. All these problems are serious but one would have expected some kind of ranking in order of seriousness.I personally consider lack of top management support as being the most serious problem because the figure at the top will determine the direction of how to solve the rest of the problems. This is quite true even in the management of institutions where researches and degrees are offered. In this chapter he has given a concluding remark which states that correct strategies and frequent examination and redefinition of strategies are required for successful operation of management development institutions in Africa.

Chapter Three deals with faculty issues.This chapter is concerned with attracting and maintaining qualified staff. Proper policies on recruitment and motivation of employees enhance the image of an institution. The author cites that an administrator who causes frustration to his staff will be left with second-rate staff since the best tend to leave first and fast because they are demanded elsewhere. Close examination of these issues reveals that the figure at the top will either strengthen or destroy a otherwise good institution. In the chapter it is argued that some administrators hate ambitious young indigenous officers who might be considered competent. He cites that positions remain unfilled due to poor recruitment policies and in some institutions, chairmen are not appointed on the basis of respect commanded from peers.The author argues that to attract staff it is not enough to provide monetary reward.The conditions of work, terminal benefits,

fringe benefits and challenges presented in the assignment matter a great deal. Finally, it is argued that the overall institution and well-being are important factors in enhancing its overall image.

Chapter Four is concerned with strategic twist. The author provides reason why the Western theories may not be relevant to African settings. It is argued that in order to transform the Western management technology into dynamic innovative institutions top management of these institutions should embark on relevant research strategy. The strategy adopted would influence the general administrative tactics including internal structures and rewards. Top management should strike a compromise between old roles and new roles knowledge building. The twist in strategy implies a change from training leading to research guided work. The researcher should have drive, commitment, strategic vision, creativity, willingness to take risks plus administrative aptitude.

The role of the Chief Executive Officer is discussed in Chapter five. His primary role is to undertake strategy manoeuvres and steering of the whole organisation.However, his role will vary depending on the structure of the organisation. In a small organisation the Chief Executive Officer may design training programmes with support of several employees and rely heavily on outside staff who are not salaried but paid a fee. In large organisations the situation is different, the role will be basically administrative but monitoring what is happening at lower levels.

In Chapter Six the author focuses on the future of Africa.Here it is indicated that moves and strategies for the future should be drawn up now. There should be projections in the future despite the fact that there are uncertainties and greater risks. The author argues that the future of Africa will largely depend on the actions and moves of people along with their leaders. Managers should be ready to meet challenges of the rapidly changing needs and redrafting of programmes to sustain the momentum of change and the right direction of change in Africa. In this case people in leadership should be honest.

This book has a number of shortcomings. One of these shortcomings is that the title seems to be misleading. Whereas the title reads Administering Management Development Institutions in Africa, most of the work is on Eastern and Southern Africa. The authors's interviews and practical problems were concentrated on Eastern and Southern Africa. The title would be appealing if western and Northern Africa were discussed. The second-shortcoming is that the book does not have checklists, for instance, on how to evaluate the appropriateness of training programmes and viable researches.Third, chapters one and six do not have a conclusion. It seems this was intentional but a conclusion on each would make the book have uniformity.

Despite the above shortcomings the book can prove useful to a number of users. One of these are the administrators at senior and top level management in management development institutions and associated decision making and policy-formulating organs in both private and public sectors of the economy. For instance, management in public universities and public corporations can learn how to manage their organisations better. Some of these organisations are on the verge of collapse unless swift action is taken.The book is also useful to teachers, and students in management and administration. Finally, the book is also useful to lecturers and general readers interested in the subject of Business Administration or personnel management. One would notice that most university lecturers tend to concentrate more on Western neoclassical theories, some of which are of little value to Africa settings. This title would be able to assist such academicians to relate neoclassical theories as those of Fredrick Taylor, Henry Fayol, Max Weber, Elton Mayo to Africa's management issues and problems.

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Psychotherapy and the Poverty Patient, (1990) E Mark Stern (ed), The Haworth Press, New York, London.

The Editor,Mark Stern,claims that this monograph takes a wide angled look at a mottled contemporary issue which presents both clinical and philosophical challenges to the practitioner. The book is compiled of the views of sixteen therapists from various schools of thought and disciplines based sometimes on their clinical experience and/or philosophy and sometimes on research. Although it is based mainly on the American experience, much of it can be transferred in principle to a third world context and does provoke thought.

The article "Power and Poverty in Psychotherapy by Jorge A Montijo argues that there is no great distinction between psychotherapy with the poor and psychotherapy in general but stresses the importance of substituting the poor/affluent dichotomy for a dialectical analysis that contemplates the poverty or relative powerlessness of the more affluent therapists, together with the inherent capacity for empowerment and liberation of the dispossessed. He says that when the therapist shares power and faces their own relative powerlessness they promote empathy, community and personal growth.

Kaisa Puhakka distinguishes between the poverty patient who does not have 'things" and the impoverished patient who experiences a sense of not having,