

**Charles Harvey . Macroeconomics for Africa .
Heinemann London . 1977 . 240 pp . £2.50**

In his preface, Mr. Harvey tells us:

"All good macroeconomic textbooks are set in the context of a particular country... it is difficult to teach macroeconomics in anglo-phone Africa using British or American textbooks.

"The structure of African economies is so fundamentally different in some respects from the structure of, say, the British economy, that parts of established theory simply do not apply and may indeed be positively misleading". (p.xiii)

Since much of macroeconomic theory has been developed and refined in the context of advanced economies and is littered with ceteris paribus reservations, Mr. Harvey quite rightly points to the difficulties arising from the use of the conventional macroeconomic textbooks in significantly different socio-economic and institutional settings:

"The student is forced to read and learn a great deal about the British or American economy in order to understand the text; and the teacher must spend a great deal of time explaining the differences between Western and African conditions". (p.xiii)

In light of these observations as well as the title of the book, one would have counted upon Mr. Harvey to develop, in his textbook, certain macroeconomic theories that would be more relevant to the particular socio-economic and institutional settings in Africa, and to thereby fill the gap that he makes us so much aware of. It will, however, immediately occur to the reader that unfortunately Mr. Harvey stays far away from this task. Whereas the conception of Mr. Harvey's book is admirable,

the approach and contents leave much to be desired. By the author's own admission, his approach is anything but original:

"...it may be unfair to put a new approach into something called a textbook... On the whole I have been slightly cautious. It is to be hoped that future texts will be able to be more adventurous..." (p.xiv) (emphasis added).

Even though this disclaimer is a disappointing anti-climax to the claims made in the earlier part of the preface, it does illustrate the true state of the author's approach and craft.

What Mr. Harvey has actually done in this slim volume is to graft on to the conventional elementary macroeconomic theory some crude but useful data and institutional details about the Zambian economy to explain, as he claims in the sub-title, "the working of present-day African economies". Given the self-imposed limitation of "the use of a mainly Zambian context", the title as well as the sub-title of the book are crude reminders that African economies are identical - so much so that a book dealing exclusively with the economy of one country (in this case Zambia) can without any qualm be labelled as Macroeconomics for Africa and indeed be recommended as a text for students at Universities in African countries as far apart as Malawi and Nigeria.

There is yet another self-imposed limitation with equally odd consequences. Since the author assumes nothing more than "a knowledge of simple algebra and graphs", the method of exposition is essentially verbal, with very moderate use of arithmetic, graphs and algebra. Calculus is not used at all and the graphs and diagrams that are employed sparingly are not difficult. In fact, the use of mathematical analysis is limited to three diagrams (of which the first two are the usual 45° diagrams of the simple linear consumption function and the third depicts the Phillips curve), the simple algebra of the multiplier, and rather elementary arithmetic of 'present-value' calculations.

Mr. Harvey's assumption concerning the mathematical background of his readers is, however, unrealistic and naive, especially so because he claims that his "book is based on a second-year course in macro-economics... taught for four years at the University of Zambia", and "... is written with English-

speaking African students in mind... that have done an elementary introductory course in economics..." It is indeed difficult to believe that in this day and age a serious-minded second-year economics student at an African University should be considered, and deliberately encouraged to remain, as innocent of the mathematical techniques as Mr. Harvey appears to do. Have the instructors of economics at the Universities in anglo-phone Africa and elsewhere been wasting the time they have been spending on insisting on knowledge of elementary mathematical techniques as an admission requirement and on continually upgrading the level of mathematical analysis as part of training in economics? Surely the author has been aware of this trend both at the University of Zambia and the University of Botswana and Swaziland - the two institutions he was associated with in recent years. If he were ever to produce a revised edition of his book, it would be advisable to improve the presentation by enlarging the mathematical parts of analysis.

Any revised edition would also benefit from inclusion of a separate chapter on Economic Growth - an important macro-economic topic which for some unexplained reason is missing from the present edition.

Who is likely to benefit from this book? Any first or second year undergraduate in Zambia who has done an elementary course in economics either at a secondary school or as part of first year programme at the University. Alternatively, someone interested in the economy of Zambia would quickly get an idea as to the structure of that economy. But specialist undergraduates at the African Universities, including those at the University of Zambia, will be frustrated by the lack of rigorous and in-depth exposition of even the traditional subject-matter of macroeconomics.

It is sad that many Western (as well as East European) economists, including some much more eminent than Mr. Harvey, continue to impose a rather low academic standard for African students not only during their teaching spells at African Universities but also through their textbooks, many of which - like the one under review - are given pretentious and misleading titles. What is needed is a reallocation of economic brain-

power towards the writing of analytically rigorous textbooks for African students. One hopes that Mr. Harvey, in his next textbook would be "more adventurous" in trying to fill the gap that exists. Unfortunately, his present volume hasn't.

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**Eckhard Strohmeier. Namibian National Bibliography.
1971 - 75 . Communications from
The Basel Africa Bibliography
Basel . 1978 . 242 pp**

The Basel Africa Bibliography (BAB) has become a well-known project which has gradually developed on the basis of a highly specialised library concentrating on Africana in general and Namibiana in particular. Several publications on geomorphological, hydrological, historical, and bibliographical topics have been published by BAB in recent years, with most of them written in German.

This language has been used also in compiling the NNB which aims at listing "titles of monographs, pamphlets, journal articles, and similar documents of Namibian interest, published anywhere in the world".

In his foreword, the author explains why he undertook this considerable task of establishing a kind of national bibliography of Namibia. He maintains that the SWA Central Administration Library failed to serve as the country's national deposit library and had no national bibliographical control of Namibia. It was felt, therefore, that the library of the Basler