

## BOOK REVIEWS – REVUE DES LIVRES

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*«Principles and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria,»*  
by Augustus ADEBAYO; published by John WILLEY  
and Sons Ltd in association with Spectrum Books Ltd., Ibadan, 1981;  
193 pages; paperback; price: N 4.00.

Reviewed by H. HEINECKE\*

There is a saying that, «You cannot know a book by looking at its cover.» The cover of this book is dull and the title is dry. But the potential reader should not be put off: the book is lively, witty and reflects the rich experiences of a seasoned administrator whose experience as a civil servant goes back to the colonial days. From 1963 to 1975, ADEBAYO was a permanent secretary and later the head of a state civil service. He also lectured in public administration and is now special adviser to a state governor.

No condition is permanent, so they say, and it is indeed an achievement to have survived the storms of public office for so long. In ADEBAYO's words, «many friends remark that the most impermanent official is the permanent secretary». He seems to have proved his friends wrong.

As a practical guide for training in public administration the book covers such topics as Qualities of an Administrator, Communication: Putting Ideas on Paper, Administrative Ethics, the Problem of the Administrator and the Professional, and the Military in Nigerian Public Administration. The author is aware that public administration can never be learnt from a textbook which is no substitute for relevant experience.

His comments on military rule are revealing: «Most of the military rulers progressed from rational decision-makers to absolute dictators... the entire civil service was reduced to a pathetic state of subjugation.» To illustrate the point, he recalls a meeting of the Supreme Military Council which he attended, at which GOWON, against the united opposition of all twelve military governors, singlehandedly bulldozed the idea of the Federal Government taking control of primary education «by introducing a joke at which all the members were convulsed with laughter.»

Civil servants are very conservative people and ADEBAYO is no exception. «The administrative function,» he says, «ensures continuance of the existing order». Most civil servants would probably agree with the dictum, «Never bite the fingers that feed you.» Accordingly, ADEBAYO, after condemning the khaki boys in one part of the book, later praises them: «the military deserve to be given credit for their vigorous attention to the social and economic development of the country,» and he feels that occasional dictatorship, in small curative doses, may be acceptable.

Some criticisms are necessary. ADEBAYO is aware that most junior workers see top officials as «exploiters who reap all the fruits of labour,» but he sees this as only an «unfortunate attitude» without seriously considering whether it may be true.

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Morover, he regards work-slackness and lack of dedication to duty as mostly a problem of the junior workers, as if it does not pervade the whole of society from top to bottom.

On the origins of corruption in the public service, he is far from explicit. He says that the military rulers «became a law unto themselves. That was usually the beginning of the road to corruption and nepotism.» Was it really the *beginning*?

Finally, it is necessary to question ADEBAYO's belief that, «In government, it is hardly possible to speak of one single goal or objectives.» Surely the major aim of all public organizations is to lubricate the private sector by providing and maintaining the human and material infrastructure for efficient capitalist growth. This view was clearly expressed by ABOYADE in his address to the Nigerian Economic Society in 1973. To attempt distinctions between administration in the public and private sectors is a somewhat futile exercise since, as Yusufu Bala USMAN says, «Public institutions are only public in name, because they are run, in fact, for the purpose of accumulating private wealth. This is a normal feature of a capitalist system.» It is thus totally wrong for ADEBAYO to say that, «Business firms are not directly integrated with the political system in the way that all public administrative agencies are. These agencies inhabit a political rather than a market environment...» Why does he not regard the market environment as political? After all, is not capitalism a political as well as an economic system?

Although the book's general approach is elitist and conservative, its strength is its chatty, even hilarious style, coupled with many incisive, practical insights into policy formation.

«*Administration for Development in Nigeria*,» edited by  
Paul COLLINS, published by African Education Press,  
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337 pages, price: N 6.50, paperback.

**Reviewed by P. HEINECKE\***

Administration as an academic discipline in Nigeria has been justified as a means of training officials to man the country's rapidly expanding public services. In contrast to political science, sociology or economics, administration tends to be limited to practical study of the working machinery of organizations. According to Max WEBER, compliance with impersonal and objective regulations is one of the major characteristics of modern bureaucracies. Consequently, textbooks on administrative studies are unlikely to fundamentally question the existing social order.