

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: Development paradigms: From paternalism to managing diversity
AUTHOR: De Beer, H.
PUBLISHER: Knowledge Resources, Randburg, 1998
REVIEWER: Karen Miller, Psychology Department, University of the Witwatersrand

This is a simply written, relatively short book which charts attitudes towards and practices relating to the development of black employees in South Africa, from the early days of apartheid to the present. The book's strengths lie in its identification and summary of the trends in employee development in South Africa over the last few decades. The last section is particularly effective in its presentation of a variety of different models for the management of diversity. The author identifies six South African managerial "mind-sets" towards black employee development, which he terms the paternalistic paradigm (\pm 1652 – 1977); the equal opportunity paradigm (\pm late 1970's to early 1980's); the black advancement paradigm (early 1980's to late 1980's); the affirmative action paradigm (from \pm 1990) and the management of diversity paradigm (from \pm 1994). He shows how the socio-political environment in South Africa during these time periods shaped the views, models, policies and programmes of theorists and practitioners in the field of employee development in this country. The main thrust of the book is that there have been successive advancements in the way we think about employee development in South Africa through the different time periods identified above. Such thinking, according to Dr. de Beer has moved through various stages; the first stage being the complete denial of opportunities for the development of black staff members in South Africa. The next stage is acceptance of the need for such development with the proviso that black employees reject so-called "traditional, African" values in favour of "Western" work values. The last stage at this point in time, is an acceptance of the benefits of value diversity and the need for an approach to employee development which incorporates the synergy between traditional "Afro-centric" values and Western "Euro-centric" values.

The book, unfortunately, however, also has some shortcomings. In Chapter 1, Dr de Beer makes a number of statements about apartheid, which, although peripheral to the main aims of the book, should not go unchallenged. Two examples stand out in particular. First, on p. 3 he states that "*it is common knowledge that the apartheid policy's aim was to develop the whites and the blacks in different geographical areas or environments. In practice the development of black employees was thwarted.*" Second, on p.4 he seems to almost justify the apartheid government's Bantu education policy by arguing it was an "over-reaction" to the "verengelsing" Afrikaners had been subjected to after the Anglo-Boer war. He says that "*In an attempt to prevent the same mistake being made, the Afrikaner educational system introduced a separate educational system for blacks.*" The imputations in these statements, that the intentions of the apartheid policy-makers were essentially innocent and its discriminatory educational practices merely an "over-reaction" to past injustices, do the book no credit. Another shortcoming of the book is the lack of any reference to the Employment Equity Act, which had been published in Bill form by 1998 (the date of first publication of this book). It is recognised that it is difficult to keep books completely current when it comes to changing legislation. However, given that Dr. de Beer defines his "*top down affirmative action paradigm*" as one in which affirmative action is enforced through legislation (p. 47), this seems like a strange omission. Finally, any discussion which focusses on one race (or gender for that matter) in comparison with another, as this book does, runs the risk of exacerbating perceived differences rather than reducing them. In focussing so strongly in the book on African versus Western values (a controversial issue in itself), Dr. de Beer sometimes seems perilously close to endorsing rather than overcoming stereotypes.

In conclusion, someone looking for an in-depth analysis of the complexities, controversies and ambiguities inherent in the areas of affirmative action and managing diversity may be disappointed with this book. However, the book does provide a useful overview of employee development efforts in South Africa and presents some interesting models and approaches for taking such development efforts further.