

Garcia-Zamor, Jean-Claude. 2001. Administrative Ethics and Development Administration. University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, N.Y., N.Y. Price: Unknown xiv + 158 pp. + bibliography + index

This is a very important book that speaks to the issues concerning ethics and development administration. The author, Jean-Claude Garcia-Zamor, defines “administrative ethics” as a “system of rules enforced by such administrative sanctions as demotion and firing, as opposed to rules enforced by such civil or criminal sanctions as monetary penalties or imprisonment.” It is believed that such a system sometime encompasses “rules and principles which combine to create an environment that fosters ethical behavior” (p.XIII). Emphasis on national development is not limited to economic development but it includes all aspect or processes that result in a modern nation-state.

The two important roles of government which public institutions enhance are: a) in the development of effective and appropriate goals and policies and b) in the implementation and assessment of the policies established by the government. The strength and weaknesses of public institutions must be understood if the development plans are to be effective. Because of the plethora of weaknesses of the public sector, many developing countries have faced tremendous problems in the global age. Unsound administrative ethics have led to serious problems in the development agenda of developing countries. The book is certainly an attempt to elucidate the weaknesses of public institutions especially in developing countries. The book is written on the assumption that there is an increasing body of work that supports the fact that there is a global consensus on ethical norms, acceptable standards and codes of conducts across regions and cultures. Parts three and four of this book is particularly useful for the readership of JSDA because it exposes the readers to cases in developing countries of Africa and Latin America. The significance of culture as an important component of ethics and morality is clearly discussed. Perhaps a good way of assessing this book is to examine whether or not it “establishes a clear and vital connection between administrative ethics, successful modern economies, and good democratic governments in both the industrialized and developing countries” (p. XIV) as the author claims.

As far as dealing with issues of ethics in developing countries, the author has done an excellent job in the first three chapters by examining ethical situations in the bureaucracies of some countries: He laments the fact that, generally, small and island states’ bureaucracies experience severe difficulty in implementing administrative ethics.

Garcia-Zamor argues in part-two that because of the lack of decentralized structure and the absence of adherence to a set of generally laid down rules, law and policies, developing countries have trouble functioning effectively. This point is “driven home” in part four, where the author discusses “ethics and development in Africa. Here the author bemoans Africa’s chronic corrupt bureaucracies and he is absolutely right about chaotic scenarios presented by the author. African leaders have very much inherited one corrupt government after another. They only have themselves to blame for this.

In part V, the author deals with the issue of ethics and development in the United States and ethical issues in the use of the Internet. In many parts of the United States especially in the southern states of Florida, Texas and California, new immigrants have had a significant impact on administrative ethics in those states. The author expertly discusses the case of Florida and examines, in general, the influence of the internet on development and the place of ethics as the American society uses this technology.

Overall, the book is worth reading and it is an above average book on the subject of administrative ethics. However, its discussion on “ethics and development is Africa” is not deep enough. The book is recommended to public policy scholars.

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