

# Book Review

## *JJN Cloete's South African Public Administration and Management*

Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers

333 pages

Revised and updated by Prof. Chris Thornhill

The book *JJN Cloete's South African Public Administration and Management* is an updated version of previous reprints of a publication by JJN Cloete. The first book was published in 1981 with a title *Introduction to public administration*. The sixth revised text was published in 1991 with a new title *Public administration and management*. The ninth revised edition was published in 1998 with a transformed title *South African Public administration and management* to contextualize public administration practices in the newly democratised South Africa. Prof. Chris Thornhill consented to undertake the responsibility to revise and update the tenth edition of the text accentuated that "I am privileged to pay homage to his [JJN Cloete] legacy of scholarly works on Public Administration" (page v). This dedication has been witnessed whereby self-study questions and activities are emphasised within the text to transfer the in-depth understanding regarding public administration practices to learners and scholars in the relevant field.

The book deals with fundamentals of public administration and management, follows a traditional approach of explaining concepts with the foundational understanding of key concepts. It implies that in order to understand public administration, it is equally necessary to understand clearly the circumstances in which public administration has evolved. The book, therefore, evolves through the explanation regarding emergence of "state" emphasising that "since time began, human beings have not been able to provide for all their needs on their own, therefore they have lived in communities. Eventually, this led them to establish states" (page 4).

The book highlights the building-blocks of public administration categorised into three sections. The first section explores the formal structures of a political organisation like legislature, governmental and judicial directives as mandatory guidelines to practise public administration. An elaborative explanation of each institution is described with detailed insight. The section covers four chapters. Chapter one aims to extensively explore the composition, roles and functions of each institution in the national, provincial and local spheres of government. This information is vital to gain an understanding regarding the foundational blocks of public administration. Chapter two discusses the issues regarding legislative institutions and their functions. "[p]eople throughout the world created public institutions that would, on their behalf, identify and articulate their common interests and needs, make rules for the protection of their common interests, decide upon activities to ensure that the rules were obeyed and common needs met, implement these activities,



control the performance of these activities and adapt them to changing conditions” (page 36). The chapter provides information to understand the relevance regarding the establishment of these institutions. Chapter three elaborates on political executive (governmental) institutions and their functions emphasising the role of President, Cabinet and political executives in the affairs of government. This hierarchical information is important to understand the levels of authority and responsibility to perform the tasks associated with relevant portfolios horizontally and vertically. Chapter four explores the role and significance of courts of law, Bill of Rights and Public Protector under judicial institutions and their functions. This information is essential to perform public administration practices meeting the constitutional and legal requirements of the country.

The second section (chapters 5-11), explains comprehensively the administrative executive functions and ethics (chapter five) emphasising the significance of ethics in public administration required for good governance. The contemplation of ethical values in public policy-making process is imperative for effective policy formulation and implementation. This deliberation is complemented with exploratory information on public policy-making (chapter six). Chapters seven and eight explore the organising and financing aspects of governance. The understanding regarding organisational arrangements is significant to address as policy decisions at the vertical and horizontal levels has substantial impact on delivery mechanisms. The realistic knowledge of financing (budget preparation) is central to every administrative practice as finances are linked to delivery mechanisms. The expert, skilled, specialised, trained, and ethical employees (human resources) are needed for effective delivery of services. This issue is logically addressed in chapter nine under staffing and human resource management. Chapter ten deals with the necessity of work procedures at the work place. The information is beneficial to assist public servants achieving the vision, mission, goals and objectives of their respective organisations. Chapter eleven gives details regarding control mechanisms. This information is crucial to provide checks and balances on administrative practices to realise the elements of good governance by bringing accountability and transparency in the system.

The third section describes auxiliary, instrumental and functional activities required to perform public administrative activities (chapters 12-14). Chapter twelve gives an explanation regarding auxiliary functions covering important issues viz. the need for research, legal services, record-keeping, and information services. These are crucial areas (complimented with generic, managerial and functional activities) in public administration as “it improves the effectiveness and efficiency with which the other functions are performed or it facilitates the performance of the other functions” (page 292). Chapter thirteen expands on instrumental functions and requirements emphasising the need for effective communication, written skills (formulation of concepts), negotiation abilities to work in harmony, and impersonal instrumental requirements. This understanding has value at the work place as “every official ...is required to undertake personal actions which are instrumental in the performance of his or her work...” every official has impersonal instrumental requirements which the institution must meet to enable him or her to do his or her work...[.]” (page 302). The last chapter gives further details about functional activities or line functions categorising government functions based on broad areas of state interventions *per se*. The subject matter explores some of the key areas of discussion covering protection, education, health, labour, and transport services.

These services are vital for external customers of public service departments expecting efficient and effective delivery of services with value for money.

The book is a comprehensive and exhaustive exposition of public administration structures, approaches and functions. For this reason local and overseas students and scholars in the field of public administration can ill afford to ignore this text. The book is a good conceptualised and contextualised text for first, second and third year students at tertiary institutions.

Book Review by:

Prof. Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad

Public Management and Administration

School of Basic Sciences

Faculty of Humanities

Vaal Triangle Campus

North-West University

PO Box 1174

Vanderbijlpark 1900

SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 016 910 3455

Fax: 016 910 3449

Cell: 072 463 8685

