
Book Review

Reviewed by Leanda Care

Email: leanda.care@gmail.com

Management: A Developing Country Perspective
by: Betty Jane Punnett
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Oxon OX14 4RN, New York, USA, 184pp
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In the context of developing countries, Betty Jane Punnett rather humbly titles this book 'Management' when it encompasses much more for a broad spectrum of readers: lecturers in management and international business, students, and international managers. It bursts some economics and management myths, provokes contemplation and introduces the major management theories in ways that encourage the reader to be critical of their application in the new context of developing countries.

Punnett very quickly opens up the discussion and highlights the need for managers to do more than understand, by analysing the environments in which they do business. Many international management texts exhort managers and students to thoroughly scan the environment and thus introduce the analytical tools, but through examples, some story-telling and acceptance of the real-life unknowns Punnett takes us further and forces the reader to question those tools and applicability to non-western locales.

It is always a blessing to pick up a text that is structured based upon a readily understandable framework, particularly when the anatomy mirrors that which academics ask of students in their writing. Punnett continues to leverage from the familiar, using conventional structures, explaining the prevailing theories and models whilst venturing into new contextual territory. The first half of the text builds the justification for the content, defines development terminology and the characteristics of developing countries, and introduces the theoretical framework for the discussion about management in the second half of the book. As to be expected, globalisation is discussed early in the book but differs from the typical lip service given to the importance of globalisation in international business. The first chapter uses historical evidence on globalisation to affirm that major change does occur over time and suggests the time may well be nigh for developing countries to hold greater sway in the global economy.

Beyond the halls of academia the definitional rigors and specific use of terminology may appear overdone, but chapter two explains why developmental terms are important and how they become value laden over time. Many words used to describe developing countries have taken on pejorative undertones but Punnett suggests that we think beyond what these countries lack, for they are not necessarily bad places to live. She then introduces the Happy Planet Index as an alternative measure of human development.

Granted, sustainability has current topical interest but I wondered whether there wasn't another point apart from the CSR message that Punnett wanted managers to take on board. This is where the subtleties of Punnett's writing and conceptualisation come through. Mostly her text is explicit and comprehensive but here and there she leads and provokes. This led me to contemplate the presumption with which managers from developed countries are often convinced of the gift of their company's contributions to the economies of developing countries, whereas in truth, differing values and expectations might mean that economic imperatives are not always the most important. If managers aim to contribute, not just to their organisation but to the developing world, an understanding of those values is crucial.

For a book on management, chapter five titled explanations of economic development could appear ambitious and to some extent superfluous. However, Punnett has a knack for describing theories and theoretical evolution that make them interesting for their own sake. More importantly, for managers and students of management and international business, such understanding of the factors and conceptualisations behind what propels a nation forward economically becomes salient when decisions are to be made on choice of destination for investment of time and resources.

In the second half of the book, the abundance of theoretical models and analytical tools which are expected to be part of any management student's kit are skilfully introduced through the management process framework of planning, organisation, staffing, leading and controlling. There is an illuminating explanation of vision, mission, strategy, values and tactics via analogy that clarifies the distinctions between these elements of strategic planning. This has obviously been developed drawing upon strong experience in teaching these concepts. With a caveat given that strategic planning may not be applicable to developing country SMEs, tools such as SWOT, PEST, Porter's five forces and concepts such as competitive advantage, cost advantages, differential advantage, economies of scale, stages of internationalisation, and management concepts including leadership trait theories, leadership styles, theory X and theory Y, Vroom's and Yetton's decision tree, expectancy theory, motivation theories, amongst others are explained and applied to both a generalised conceptualisation of firms in developing countries and some specific examples. Hofstede's values framework and characteristics of developing countries are used extensively to review and reconsider how the theories and models may or may not work under these differing circumstances.

Assumptions that we hold such as the inefficacy of punishment and extrinsic factors as motivators are questioned. Even the assumption that firms exist predominantly for profitability and growth is implicitly questioned through Punnett's focus on specific needs that are salient to firms and individuals in developing countries: religious and cultural values may be what ultimately define businesses and management. This raises questions as to whether some of our teaching, particularly to students from developing countries, may be inordinately imperialistic.

Should lecturers use the entire book as a prescribed text, the connecting paragraphs given to introduce following sections and chapters greatly assist in building a pathway and guide for the reader. They, however, may make it a little more difficult for teachers to utilise individual chapters in isolation. Extensive teaching resources have been made available on-line and the questions and exercises at the end of each chapter serve to highlight and explore the most important points.

This book serves to commence the conversation about management in developing countries. In doing so, developing countries tend to be bunched together which has its expeditious merits but it also risks painting an inaccurate and generalised picture. As the knowledge in the field builds, theoretical discussions will surely benefit from more specific examples of the theory in action along with exceptions as found in countries within the developing world. Having said that, Punnett has included some wonderful examples in the management process chapters, and particularly in the discussion on separation of powers between government and business, and on cultural values and leadership.

As the literature on management in developing countries matures, we may see a change in the theoretical foundations upon which this and future texts are built. We can look forward to that shift over time, and even, perhaps a borrowing from theories developed in the developing world to contexts more familiar to western managers and academics. *Management, a developing country perspective* starts us on that pathway with a solid footing and opens the minds of lecturers, students and business managers to new contexts, new perspectives and untested assumptions in management and international business.