

William Fox and Ivan H. Meyer. *Public Administration Dictionary*, 1995. viii + 139 pp. ISBN 0 7021 3219 5. Juta. Price R69,00.

As a member of the Dictionary for Political and Associated Sciences Terms for the past 16 years and consequently having some idea of the work involved in compiling such a dictionary, I congratulate Proff. Fox and Meyer. Their openness towards comments can only be commended. However, this invites the inevitable reservations.

The book would have been more valuable if the entries (not necessarily the explanations) were translated into Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans, since translation often clarifies meaning and forces a rethinking of the explanation as well.

Typical South African terms are also absent, e.g. there is a wide variety of terms surrounding the basic term, *executive*, which is not in the dictionary. I also find the dictionary regional. Proff. Fox and Meyer are born and bred Southern university academics. This is apparent in the selection of terms. The term *organisation* which is preferred by the Southern universities, is used throughout the dictionary. The Northern universities prefer *institution*.

Furthermore, the dictionary presupposes Stellenbosian systems and structuralist approaches to Public Administration. The regionalism of the dictionary could lead overseas academics in Public Administration, students, members of the public, journalists, public servants, and lexicographers who use the dictionary and who are not aware of this, to think that the terms in the dictionary represent an overall picture regarding Public Administration terminology. This will create a false impression of the nature and scope of Public Administration in South Africa.

To comment on some specific terms: *Body* and *organ* (*institution, branch, section, instrument* are better alternatives) are archaic terms from the days when Herbert Spencer applied Darwin's theory of evolution to politics. *Power* and *authority* are defined as meaning the same, while there is a clear distinction between them. Power is a personal concept, perhaps even a physical one. It is a unitary concept. Power can never be written into a constitution. Authority is a structural or organisational concept which can and should be written into a constitution where it acts to prevent excesses of power on the part of officials. The President, when he acts officially, has the authority to appoint a minister. He may have the power to appoint a person he prefers, contrary to the wishes of everyone else, but to authorise the appointment, he must follow prescribed rules. Power alone is insufficient. The incorrect use of the terms *power* and *authority* is encountered in constitutions and books on politics and Public Administration which refer to the "three powers": legislative, executive and judicial. These are not powers, they are authorities, or to use the newly introduced term, *competencies* — a term used in the previous South African constitution and which should be included in the dictionary. Authority is granted or allocated to someone, and can be withdrawn; power is never granted, it is taken. A "Power of Authority" does not grant power, it grants authority. It can

be withdrawn, while power cannot be withdrawn. Authority can be shared, but power is not shared.

Terms which are central to the dictionary, *administration*, *public administration*, *public service* (which does not appear in the dictionary, although *civil service* does — but the 1993 constitution does not carry the term *civil service*) and *Public Administration* are used in a very confusing manner. In 1947 Dwight Waldo suggested that a distinction be made between Public Administration and public administration: the former the science, and the latter the practice. The definition of the term *administration* drifts off into a description of an administrative system, which has a different meaning from administration. (This, incidentally, is an example of the influence of the systems thinking of the two compilers.) The term *public administration* is described as "the executive branch of government", which is wrong. The executive branch of government can only be the Cabinet. I maintain that there is a clear difference between the public service and the executive. The public service assists the executive, the Cabinet. In the dictionary, *public administration* is used as a synonym for the term *public service*. I know this is done all over in books and lectures on Public Administration, but it leads to confusion. One sometimes comes across such utterly ridiculous writing as: "In (P)public (A)administration ..." I have heard speakers say: "Public Administration with capital letters ..." It would be better if the terms *Public Administration* and *public service* are used. We should get rid of the habit of using the term *public administration* as a replacement for *public service*. In the Preface to the book, *public administration* is used in reference to the science of Public Administration. The authors promise the reader, in their Foreword, that the *subject language* (their emphasis) of Public Administration will be dealt with, but the term *Public Administration* does not appear in the dictionary.

When a term is included in a dictionary, the compilers should take the full flow of its meaning into consideration when explaining it. In this regard, also see the truncated manner in which the terms *dualism*, *gatekeeper* and *meaning* were explained. *Bureaucracy* should be looked at again. The British, and their former colonies, use the term *bureaucracy* in a negative sense, indicating that public officials go beyond their authority and assume a position of power. The Europeans (the French, Italians, Germans, Dutch, etc.) use the term as we would use the term *public service*, that is, they use *bureaucracy* instead of *public service*. The Americans distinguish between positive and negative bureaucracy — the latter having the meaning which South Africans append to it. *Audi alteram partem* is incorrectly defined. It means to listen to the other party before making a decision.

The use of the term *government* should be looked at throughout the book. In the strict sense of the word, there is only one government, the Cabinet. A government governs, it does not rule. A government makes policy; the legislature sanctions it in its Acts. There is a difference between *government* and *executive*. A Government, Cabinet, decides on policy. The *Executive*, although the very same Cabinet or Government members, comes into effect after Parliament

had approved the Acts based on the proposals of the Government. Parliamentary approved policy proposals of the Government are then executed by the Executive. Furthermore, the term *government* cannot, and should not be equated with legislature, as is the case in this dictionary. Two entries should be made: *Government* (see *Executive*), and *government* (see *executive*). The reason for this is that the English use the term *government* in a broad sense; it covers more or less everything from the legislature to the public service. In Afrikaans, the term *regering* is used in its restricted, and correct sense as related to the composition, authority and actions of the government of the day, the Cabinet. *Governance* is *Regeerkunde* in Afrikaans. It is a science and needs to be re-defined. Therefore, there should be two entries: *Governance*, the art of governance; and *Governance*, the science of government.

The definition of *staff personnel*, "all the active members of an organisation", implies that there are also nonactive members. The explanation of *decision process* is similarly vague, as is that of *spoils system*. "A system of recruiting and appointing personnel in the public sector on the basis of political reasons" is *political nepotism*, which is not in the dictionary. The need for meticulous care with language in a dictionary will be dealt with later, but to point something out at this stage: one does not recruit personnel from within in the public service for appointment. It should read: "a system of recruitment of personnel for political reasons to be appointed to the public service".

I add some remarks on *Highlights on the History of Public Administration* which precedes the dictionary entries:

- Plato did not promote principles of specialisation, it was Aristotle who introduced specialisation into the academic world.
- Diocletian: The date must be AD.
- Frank Goodnow was the first Professor in Municipal Government, and the first to take Public Administration out of the classroom into the real world — he was advisor to the Chinese Government on matters relating to their public service.
- Max Weber did not introduce the bureaucratic type of organisation. It existed long before him; he merely expounded it.
- Henry Fayol is not mentioned. His *Principles of Administration*, renamed *administrative processes* by J.J.N. Cloete in 1967, was published in 1915.
- The founding of the League of Nations is not mentioned.
- The first Professor in Public Administration in Britain was Edgar Wallas, appointed in 1919 at the London School of Economics.
- Public Administration was offered at Aylesbury in England from about 1840. Senior officials to be placed in colonies were trained there.
- It is incorrect to say that Dahl was in favour of "universal principles of administration"; he was actually opposed to such principles. He argued in favour of the establishment of a "science of Administration" which could not proceed as long as a few principles were adhered to.
- Herbert Simon: the sentence contains an error. It should be "attacked" and not "attached".

- In 1947 Waldo wrote on the need for a distinction between *public administration* and *Public Administration*.
- Cloete: Public Administration has been taught in South Africa since 1920. His book, and not Public Administration, became prominent.
- Kuhn introduced the term *paradigm shifts*, not *paradigms*.

Although this is a dictionary for Public Administration, I find that the net which had been cast, is too small. If the boundaries of the public service is taken into account, then those factors which have an appreciable influence within the public service, must be added to the mix. The two authors already included economic and computer terms. Politics also play an important role within the public service, and political terms related to the public service should be included. The dictionary, somehow, reflects a strong belief in the politics-administration dichotomy, which leads to the exclusion of political terms. The politics-administration approach is clearly outdated anyway: see Marx, F.M., 1946. *Elements of Public Administration*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

In a dictionary, unless unavoidable, the singular should always be used. The authors use both the singular and plural of terms, also in their explanations. E.g. *administrative institutions, conference committees, demands* and *informal groups*. See also *delegates non potest delegare* where "delegates" is plural and should be singular. The plurals "bureaux" and "groups" in the definition of *bureaucracy* "rule by bureaux or by groups of appointed officials" should also be in the singular. An example of incorrect explanation due to the use of the plural is *loosely coupled systems* which should read: "a system ... among its members", and not "systems ... among their members". The use of the plural, "systems", and "their", gives the wrong impression, that of a loose level of connectedness among different systems, which, within each one, may not be loosely bound. The correct meaning is a loose connection between members of the same system.

A dictionary of Public Administration terms should be all-encompassing rather than regional or biased towards an approach. *A dictionary should never be based on the knowledge, idiosyncracies, preferred approaches, or lived-in academic world of the compilers, however encompassing it may be. It should be based on collective knowledge within the science, hence the term "dictionary compilers"*.

To conclude: at this stage the dictionary of Proff. Fox and Meyer is no more than a starting-point, and only then if meticulous care is taken with further editions.

Donavon Marais
Emeritus Professor
Public Administration
University of South Africa
Pretoria
South Africa