

“Employers’ Guide to the Employment Equity Act” by Simona Tinarelli (Van Schaik, Pretoria, 2000)

“Employers’ Guide to the Employment Equity Act” is aimed, according to the author, at assisting those in the labour arena (employers, managers, labour relations practitioners, union officials, and students) to develop a practical understanding of the Employment Equity Act (hereafter, the Act). The book is divided into two halves. The first half consists of ten chapters focusing on the content of the Act and other related issues. Chapter one introduces the reader to the concept of and rationale for employment equity and gives a brief overview of the Act. Chapter two explores the idea of discrimination and describes the different forms this may take, as well as the company’s obligations in this regard. Chapter three briefly focuses on affirmative action, while chapter four goes into some detail with regard to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the employment equity plan. This is followed by information on conducting an organisational audit in chapter five. Chapter six is concerned with the monitoring and enforcement of the Act. Chapters seven, eight, nine and ten form a relatively small part of the text, and very briefly look at general provisions of the Act, psychometric testing, the outsourcing of labour, and diversity management respectively. The second half of the book consists solely of relevant Schedules, Codes of Good Practice, as well as forms and documents taken directly from the Department of Labour.

The author covers content that is essential to anyone working in the field, but it is unclear how much additional insight this book will provide its target market over and above what appears in the Act itself and its related Schedules and Codes of Good Practice. The primary sources of information used by the author are indeed these very documents and any additional commentary provided by her serves as a rudimentary supplement to the Act and documentation that is easily and widely available from the Department of Labour. As such, the book is suitable as an introductory text for undergraduate students, as well as for lower level managers beginning their engagement with the Act. It will also be useful to managers not directly involved in the Human Resources function of the company, but who would like a well-rounded and practical understanding of the Act. This book provides a quick and easy reference for more experienced practitioners, but is unlikely to offer anything new to people already wor-

king in this field. Small and medium-sized companies may find this book to be a valuable “how to” guide, but perhaps only when matters are straight forward and uncomplicated, since the book fails to address more complex issues surrounding the Act, its implementation, and its consequences.

Original contributions by the author include an attempt at developing an interview or focus group schedule to be used as a tool for organisational audits. While this can be very useful for practitioners, the schedule is again merely derived from the legislation and related documents. For it to be useful, the practitioner would need to have additional knowledge on research and interview skills, and would undoubtedly have to make some significant changes to the schedule as it appears in the book. The chapters on psychometric testing and managing diversity are attempts at including important and central ideas in the area of employment equity. Unfortunately the author does these key issues very little justice in her elementary discussion. The chapter on psychometric testing is abbreviated and derivative, and makes mention of highly abstruse research and statistical procedures without appropriate explanation or elaboration. Similarly, the chapter on diversity management attempts to cover a field which is highly complex, yet it simply reduces an elaborate array of literature into five pages of insufficiently explained ideas. This may serve simply to provide introductory readers with just enough information to confuse them.

With regard to the style in which the book is written, the author’s frequent repetition of points and passages from the Act reiterates the introductory character of the book. While this may be useful for first-time users of the Act, it may become frustrating for others. The author writes simply and directly, but the benefit of this style is hindered somewhat by a structure that is, at times, confusing and overly complex. Summaries at the end of every chapter may be useful for students and as quick references.

“Employers’ Guide to the Employment Equity Act”, then, makes valuable reading for those beginning to explore the field, and is a useful reference source for those more advanced.

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