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Book Review: Sudatta Ranasinghe and Mangala Fonseka, *Research in Management: A Guide to Practice*. Colombo, Postgraduate Institute of Management, 2011, x + 220 pp., SLR 700, ISBN: 978-955-8969-14-4

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Two eminent professors Sudatta Ranasinghe and Mangala Fonseka have attempted to fill an existing knowledge void on practical underpinnings of management and social science research. They have addressed a wide spectrum of concerns related to methodology as well as methods in business research and minimized common dilemmas faced by many Sri Lankan postgraduate students, researchers, managers and academics in undertaking scientific method based research.

The focus of the text has been mainly to make the reader aware of fundamental concepts of research process with local as well as global examples so as to inspire different segments such as local postgraduate students, researchers, business managers as well as academic researchers and teachers in Sri Lanka. Its main thrust has been to make the researcher's jargons more simple and understandable. Especially, the simple and direct use of language with less technical orientation is of much value to the young research community in Sri Lanka as the very few local and many recommended international texts on management and social research methods have failed to enlighten the research students as well as practitioners in Sri Lanka. Hence, it is applicable to academics, students, managers and researchers in any of the management as well as social science disciplines at large. It is especially useful to both undergraduate, postgraduate diploma as well as postgraduate research students including MPhil and PhD levels in Sri Lanka.

Each of the 10 chapters provide significant insights into important topics such as introduction to research, research process, variables, measurement, methods related to cased study, data collection, sampling and statistical techniques. Chapter 10 – a Guide to Practice and appendices of the book bear evidence to its innovative approach to provide readers with a practical exposure to research. This chapter further illustrates examples on data analysis techniques using software whilst the samples of

literature survey, questionnaire, list of management journals, and reliability measure of Cronbach's Alpha (Sekaran, 2003) and specimen research proposal in appendices are commendable value adding features to local research enthusiasts.

This work of professors Ranasinghe and Fonseka has been made available to business and academic community of the Asian region as well as Sri Lanka at the most demanding moment because modern-day organizations increasingly face numerous challenges in an intensely competitive global market place. Hence, a commitment to research can be a major source of identifying and exploiting emerging business opportunities as well as solve issues to achieve the sustainability of the triple bottom line of business. Further, research can improve the nation's competitiveness as well as the living condition where these two eminent authors contributed towards competitiveness of this island nation immensely.

1. Content

This book presents a comprehensive, systematic and holistic approach to understanding the theory and practice related to management research. The chapters are organized in an easy-to-grasp manner to the novel researchers. Indeed it follows a logical sequence to explain as to how researchers can initiate the scientific research process (Sekaran, 2003). It introduces basics of scientific and empirical research process with a special eye on management and organizations settings. It covers a variety of important aspects relating to the scientific research design namely, measurement of concepts and methods of data collections including both quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. Then, it draws the attention to options available for sampling, data analysis and reporting. Finally it provides a rationale for selecting appropriate statistical techniques for data analysis with some illustrations on the application on statistical software package.

Chapter one introduces the broader philosophical foundation of research. It makes the reader aware of the epistemological and ontological assumptions which guide researchers in adopting a particular research paradigm and methodology leading to methods (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2005).

Chapter two sets the logical sequence to undertake scientific research process by introducing empirical research process. Hence it makes the reader comfortable of the research process and familiar with the hypothetico-deductive approach (Sekaran, 2003). Appendix-I linked to this chapter provides a basic understanding of how to undertake a critical literature survey (Uyangoda, 2010, Saunders et al., 2005) whilst appendix-II makes the reader familiar with a wide spectrum of key international and local management related journals.

Chapter three presents properties of the different levels of measurement whilst highlighting common issues in selecting appropriate measurement scales (Sekaran, 2003). It further discusses the key psychometric properties of a good measurement scale by introducing reliability aspect of measures as well as different aspects of validity related concerns of a measurement scale. Appendix-IV provides a special introduction to one of the commonly used reliability measures, i.e. Cronbach's Alpha, with an example. It also summarizes confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as a widely used techniques for confirming the factor structure of a scale (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2009) with an emphasis on structural equation modeling (SEM) as an emerging analysis technique used in quantitative research in management in global arena.

Chapter four makes the reader aware of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. This helps researchers consider different strategies for data collection methods beyond the familiar questionnaire survey method according to different aims of a study. Appendix-II also presents a sample survey questionnaire to provide some flavour of a real survey data collection tool. As an extension to this chapter, Chapters five and six introduce case study method and grounded theory approach respectively with both local and international examples. These two chapters guide researchers to develop management theory building competencies by developing unique research designs (Saunders et al., 2005).

Chapter seven creates an initial awareness of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis strategies, which would broaden the mind set of researcher in identifying wide variety of analytical options available. It also focuses on improving the researcher's synthesizing skills by relating the findings of data analysis to discussion. At the end of this chapter, the reader is enriched with the common sense of developing a research paper by providing the common structure of it as it fits to a wide range of international journals followed by the American Psychological Association's (2001) citation style.

Progressing in methodological aspect of a research, Chapter eight introduces a wide variety of scientific and non-scientific sampling techniques under the umbrella term of probability vs. non probability sampling suited for practical situations under both quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2001). It also highlights the basic logic of sample size determination.

Chapter nine especially targets the quantitative school of research and enlightens the researcher on the array of parametric and non-parametric statistical techniques available for data analysis covering both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2003) that help make managerial inferences by testing hypotheses. The salient feature of this chapter is that it discovers the basic premises of parametric and non-parametric statistical approaches and empowers the researchers to decide on the right data analysis technique(s) depending on the nature of data set as well as the particular research question in hand.

In furthering statistical analysis of data, Chapter ten draws attention of the researcher to the application of leading statistical software such as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS®). It orients the researcher to use modern software in management and social science research (Aaker et al., 2001). It is praiseworthy that the authors have produced some SPSS® outputs for illustrating important data analysis techniques with examples moving from conceptual model to hypotheses testing plus analysis of mediator and moderator relationships of variables as well as independent-dependent relationships. Additionally, it provides the interpretation of SPSS ® output in a simple manner. The specimen research proposal provided in Appendix-V satisfies the immediate need of amateurs in research (Uyangoda, 2010), especially postgraduate students who initiate the research process by developing a comprehensive research proposal.

2. Evaluation

The authors have achieved harmony between the quantitative vs. qualitative debate by highlighting the timely requirement of both paradigms (Uyangoda, 2010). They stress the significance of having a hybrid approach to management research to improve quality of decision making in the emerging post-modern era. They also acknowledge the necessity of theory building as well as theory testing in management disciplines to successfully face the global business challenges in the region.

The two chapters on case study research and grounded theory method address the emerging trends in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2005) in the global research arena. However, they have undermined the potential of case study research method for theory testing under the positivistic paradigm.

The book inspires the novice-researcher in Sri Lanka to undertake empirical research with a greater confidence because the authors have embedded many local and international reader-friendly examples from the beginning to the end of the text including appendices. It is noteworthy that this text stimulates learner-centred and active learning style in the reader, which the other research texts at the local as well as regional level seem to lack.

The presently available international texts used in the postgraduate level programs in Sri Lanka do not sufficiently illustrate applications of research methodological concepts. They cover many concepts in the global arena, but not in an easy-to-grasp manner to the local postgraduate students. In response, the two authors have addressed this common issue with simplicity and organization based examples. In addition to this, many of the other texts are very much biased towards either quantitative approach or qualitative approach. However, this text strikes a balance between the two extremes. Hence, the reader can be familiar with multiple methods and the emerging trend of hybrid research approach.

The text attracts the reader on the one hand as the cover page has a concept with high quality graphic design that has a scholastic appeal. The papers are matchable with the quality of international texts. The book is portable, light-weight and easy-to-carry in hand. End of chapter references makes the reader motivated to look for the original sources for more details. It is also reasonably priced.

3. Conclusion

There is no doubt that it is timely and important for Sri Lankan researchers in the management arena. Further, it is noteworthy to mention that this book has made a commendable attempt to identify the novice researcher's dilemmas in undertaking management and social science research in the Sri Lankan context (Uyangoda, 2010) based on the authors' teaching and supervision experience for a long period of time. Hence, they have successfully designed the structure of the text with a local flavor, especially targeting postgraduate level researchers in any management discipline. The text is enriched with both concepts and practical examples covering a wide range of research skills coupled with attachments like sample literature survey, a list of management journals and specimen research proposal.

With the above positive additions, it would be better if a future edition of this text can incorporate one chapter on critical research perspective and discourse analysis as emerging qualitative research methods. Further, the authors can consider improving the chapter on a-guide-to-practice by incorporating some emerging software applications like AMOS® which is heavily used in structural equation modelling approach to data analysis at the global level research and NVivo which is a software used for qualitative data analysis coupled with a CD covering key areas. It should also be acknowledged that the future edition of the text needs to address ethical issues and stakeholders' concerns in management research (Saunders et al., 2005).

In final thought the two authors can be judged, no doubt, to have reached their aims to promote management research applications through one compact book which covers the essence of many of global research texts and writings with a local flavour. From the inception to end of this review

process, reviewer, wholeheartedly acknowledges that this book provides a holistic platform on which the voices of those involved in the management research are heard or well taken or understood by these eminent senior hands in the Sri Lankan management research scenario. Readers from Sri Lanka will find comfort that much of this book's contents are built upon the scholarly and practical expertise of contributors who are leading names within this field in Sri Lanka. This book wholly achieves its aim of delivering a comprehensive understanding of both the macro and micro aspects of research in management

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