

Whither Management Research? Reflections and Resolutions

by

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Preamble

It gives me a deep sense of delight to witness the commencement of the ninth International Conference on Management and Economics (ICME) 2020, under the theme of “The Role of Business Intelligence in Shaping Organizations in Emerging Economies” organized by the Faculty of Management and Finance (FMF), University of Ruhuna. As a continuous learner in management, whilst simultaneously playing multiple roles of a teacher, a researcher, a supervisor and an examiner, my attempt is to share some relevant thoughts on a topic that has a direct relevance to the selected conference theme. In essence, it is a reflection on management research in the Sri Lankan context.

1. Introduction

“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.”, so said Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, a Nobel Prize winning Hungarian psychologist. It is, in fact, developing a third eye to see beyond what is obvious. The field of management in Sri Lanka, both private and public sectors alike can immensely benefit if more insights beyond mere information would be the norm in making policy decisions. Management research is of utmost importance, in this sense, globally and locally alike.

Management research is a part of the wider array of social research. As many of us have come across, management research is viewed as “a systematic, data-based, critical, objective, scientific investigation into a specific problem, undertaken with the purpose of finding answers or solutions to it” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013:2). Whilst positive initiatives are being taken, current situation with respect to research in Sri Lanka is far from a satisfactory level. Pinikahana (2013) highlighted the need to focus on for private sector to collaborate in university research.

“Sri Lanka contributes only 0.17% from GDP whereas Singapore contributes 2.3%, South Korea, 2.9% and China, 1.3% from their GDP for research. A recent report published by the Ministry of Technology & Research in Sri Lanka revealed that Sri Lanka has only 287 researchers per million which is less than the world average of 894. The average number of researchers per million in the developed world and the developing world is 3272 and 374 respectively. It is clear from these statistics that Sri Lankan situation is worse than the average third world situation. The most alarming situation is that it is getting worse in recent years. For example, in 1996 Sri Lanka had 6000 full time researchers including university researchers but by 2006 this number declined to 4200.”(Pinikahana, 2013)