

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
Volume 9 : 8 August 2009
ISSN 1930-2940

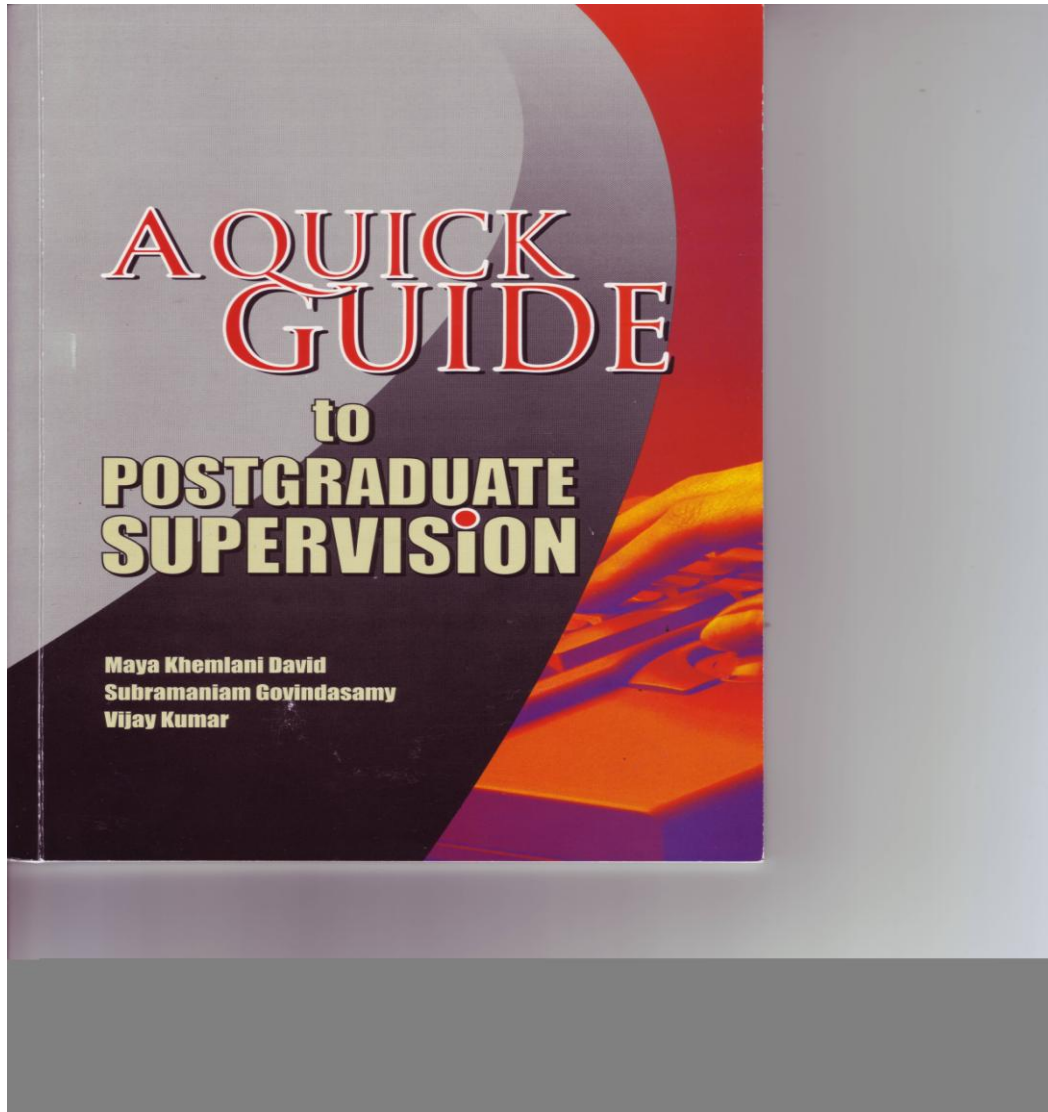
Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.
Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.
Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.
B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.
A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.
Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.
K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.
Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

A Review of
A Quick Guide to Postgraduate Supervision

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

A Review of
A Quick Guide to Postgraduate Supervision

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.



A Quick Guide to Post Graduate Supervision by Maya Khemlani David, Subramanian Govindasamy and Vijaya Kumar (published by Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 2008) is an interesting, relevant and very useful book. This book consists of 45 pages excluding the reference pages. The book has rich and useful content for the post graduate supervisors as well as the students.

Meeting an Urgent Need – Filling in a Vacuum

It is often noticed that most of the junior faculty at the Universities in Malaysia face difficulty in guiding and supervising the studies of their research students. However, it is mandatory for the staff to gain fruitful experience in supervising students at the post graduate level in order to get their career promotion. This book fills in the vacuum by providing appropriate proper instructions to the supervisors by keeping in mind the rules and regulations of the Universities in Malaysia. A reading of this book will give confidence to the supervisors to help their students to do research efficiently and present their research products in a manner and format that match international standards.

A Result of Years of Research and Supervisory Experience

We clearly see that this short book is an outcome of many years of dedicated leadership in several fields of research. The authors of this book are actively involved in research supervision and research mentoring. Dr. Maya Khemlani David is a senior professor who has helped many students to pursue solid research in English, Education, Linguistics and adjacent sciences. Her experience and expertise make this book a very readable and useful book of information, tips for better performance and better writing.

The chapters are carefully designed and the topics for each chapter are insightfully selected and presented, keeping in mind the current trends and the actual need of the students.

The book has 4 chapters. The chapters and its contents are graded systematically.

Chapter 1 Prior to Actual Research Supervision

This chapter indicates the rules and regulations both the supervisors and the students should know and follow. These include the protocol for postgraduate supervision. A general feeling of the supervisors is that they have to just discuss the academic matters, present a format for the work to their students, and then it is the duty of the students to complete the work.

But the authors of this book have gone deep into the problems faced both by the students as well as the supervisors and discuss in detail the multifaceted roles of the supervisors starting from initiating active and relevant discussion, research mentoring, collaborating with the students in bringing out short academic works and, above all, acting as a friend to the students.

These are the roles through which the supervisors can build the spirit of an academician in the personality of the students. Every role mentioned above is elaborated and its specific impact on building a systematic and useful academic career for the students illustrated. An impressive training method is discussed with the objective of how students can be trained to be critical of their own work.

Chapter 2 During the Actual Research Supervision

This chapter discusses how actually the supervisor can work with the students on the selected topic of the researcher. Further, it clearly discusses the academic time-table for the doctoral

students. Systematically worked out time schedule has headings such as Preparatory work, literature review, designing the study, developing instruments, proposal defense, data gathering-1, study reviewing, data gathering-2, data gathering-3, coaching and analysis, oral defense and final submission. The above mentioned systematic development of academic routine is given meaningful explanation with appropriate illustrations. These illustrations are helpful both for the supervisors as well as the students to do their respective works while actively engaged in the research work.

Furthermore, as the sub-skill for the supervisors, the book deals with strategies related to critical reading, analytical thinking, the ideas, framing the theories on the basis of the collected data, etc. The section on evaluation exhaustively deals with the identification of the gap in the research with certain guidelines to rectify the pitfalls. This section of guidance is useful for the students during the later stages of their research regarding how the thesis can be edited in a more cohesive and coherent manner.

On Plagiarism

The book also discusses how to identify the plagiarized draft, if any, and the techniques to get it rectified by constant discussion with the students without making the students frustrated.

With the emergence of the Internet, plagiarism has become a serious menace all over the world. The word *plagiarism* is derived from the Latin word *plagiarus*. According to standard dictionaries, this word means “kidnapper, seducer, plunderer” (www.dictionary.com). Indeed, a good telling description of the act of plagiarism.

Indian traditions did not accept plagiarism as a legitimate process. Processes of citations were not well established in the tradition. Actually, using a phrase or a thought or a line from an earlier poet of eminence was considered a praiseworthy act, an act of honoring who went before us. Ancient Tamil grammarians actually take this position.

We must also remember that in ancient times production of literary, grammatical or other research activities was not stupendous as in modern times. Mere use of a famous line from a well known poem instantly would remind the reader/listener that the line was from another honorable work. Religious traditions across various religions also looked upon such limited usage as permissible.

Inadequacy of preparation and lack of motivation to do own research and writing could lead to plagiarism. This act is certainly facilitated by the enormous materials available in the Internet and by the woefully inadequate ways to correctly identify the plagiarized text verbatim.

There is copyright infringement in addition to issues of morality. Ultimately, success in this area (that is, elimination of plagiarism in research papers, etc.) depends on the researcher’s moral values.

Methods to identify quickly the plagiarized aspects of materials produced are becoming more effective through sensitive software. Universities in Malaysia, India and other nations should insist on using such software before the submission of the dissertations.

Counseling

The sub section on counseling in supervision is well organized and thought-provoking. This section is more like the psychoanalysis of the student's behavior while engaged in active research. This involves the discussion about the causes for frustration among the students mainly while they are engaged in writing the research report. This section gives in detail how the supervisor can solve this problem through discussion and negotiation with the students. This one is a very practical section, a real need.

Chapter 3 In the Later Stages of Supervision

This chapter primarily talks about the presentation of the final thesis which includes culling out the relevant points from the draft and proper placement of these points where the significant points should be placed in the thesis, and how the sub points should be placed, etc. Also, this chapter gives extensive guidance to the supervisor to prepare their students for the oral examination which includes the points to be considered while defending the thesis.

Chapter 4 Student's Expectations of Supervisors

This chapter gives the actual result of the survey the authors undertook among the research students of the University with the objective of identifying their expectations from the research guides. Main focus is given to get the feedback from the students in the areas of academic knowledge of the supervisors, patience, supportiveness, friendly nature of the supervisor, time management, attending to the work regarding the correction of the thesis, etc. All the areas mentioned above are illustrated from the point of view of the students.

The final section of this chapter gives briefly how the supervisor can identify the areas of further research or job for the students by giving more thrust to career guidance.

The book ends with an annotated section on the resources for the supervisors by mentioning some important books which teach supervisory techniques. This section is followed by a subject index and references.

A Significant and Useful Book

This book is certainly a significant contribution and renders meaningful help to the postgraduate supervisors who want their students to excel in their research and to produce good academic research works.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.
Faculty of Malaysian Languages
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
sammohanlal@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 8 August 2009

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

A Review of *A Quick Guide to Postgraduate Supervision*