

GOOD BOOK - BAD BOOK

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I had an interesting exchange with a graduate student this week about the meaning of an off-hand comment I made about a new management book being atheoretical. His follow-up question to me was "how did I make that judgement?" I responded with the following points:

1. Old References

(only old references were cited--- I am not opposed to old references, in this case it was loaded with them in a topic area that has been continuously maturing).

2. Key References Not Cited

(almost anyone could name the very top scholars/thinkers in the domain of the book--- in this book none were cited).

3. Refereed Publications Not Cited

(even if it is a practitioner book, the book should be based on best scholarly thinking--- in this instance only 2 refereed publications were cited for the entire book).

4. Key Terms Not Precisely Defined

(every field has rival definitions and tension around meaning of key words and concepts--- in this instance the index didn't even contain the key words, let alone reference to definitions in the text. Even so, a search for the definitions that were presented in the text revealed them to be undisciplined).

5. Lack of Internal Consistency

(every author makes an implicit or explicit promise as to what the book is about or what it will deliver--- in this instance the sub-title was more honest than the title. The implicit promise of "rigor" did not match the presentation level, and the actual scope of the book, and certainly did not match the explicit promise made by the author).