

Theories should be relevant

A PARADIGM shift is needed within the academic circle to stop teaching old theories and ideas that are no longer relevant to the current business environment.

Executives all over the world who have attended master of business administration (MBA) courses have learned similar theories that were not directly connected to their organisational ecosystem.

Even those who've never attended the courses can think in similar ways, as these theories have been around for a very long time. We no longer feel excited, thrilled, or surprised by new business strategies because of the assumption of "business as usual" and theories that are perceived as universal adaptors.

In Malaysia, managers are predominantly influenced by foreign-oriented theories that they have

learnt from managerial textbooks developed from Western organisational values despite the fact that these theories are argued to be not relevant here.

Managers need concepts, models and frameworks to be more flexible and dynamic. Unfortunately, it is apparent that management research to date has been unable to provide comprehensive and scientific information on how companies should manage activities in complex organisational settings.

Researchers have also been complaining about the lack of managers' support to undertake research in their organisations.

It is critical for researchers to gather adequate data from management practices to understand

real problems faced by managers.

This will enable researchers to produce theories or conceptual frameworks that reflect what is happening in daily operations.

While theory is meant to guide practice, theory itself should be developed from relevant practices.

Although, reminders are being sent to practitioners on the importance of research on the body of knowledge, Asian participation in research is still low.

It is imperative to have both companies and higher learning institutions involved

in smart collaborations to make use of the pool of experts in academia in solving complex managerial problems.

The development of theory as well as practice should be cognisant of the surrounding organisational environment.

Furthermore, theory and prac-

tice exist in a reciprocal relationship.

While theory is meant to guide practice, theory itself should be developed from relevant practices.

In the event of changes in the industry, it is argued that the failure of management research to reflect the characteristics and challenges of contemporary organisational settings has led to a loss of relevance and gives rise to the need for more research to explain current practices.

It is believed that the first step to narrow this gap is to understand practices in actual organisational settings.

The second step is to develop theories suitable for the Malaysian socio-economic environment.

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