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## A Review of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research with an MPSB Knowledge Supply Chain Framework

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### **Abstract:**

*A key concern in management research and management development is on how to produce and transfer relevant and actionable management knowledge to the world of management practices. Addressing this concern is an aspiration of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research, which was launched by the writer in 1992 to evaluate various management disciplines based on Critical Systems Thinking (CST). This paper provides an updated account of the MPSB Research and examines how the MPSB Research can create relevant and actionable management knowledge, based on a proposed theoretical framework called an MPSB knowledge supply chain framework.*

**Key words:** MPSB Research, MPSB knowledge supply chain framework, Management research, Critical systems thinking.

### **Introduction**

This paper discusses a management research program, called the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research, that makes primary use of literature review on management disciplines. Conducting such a management research promotes management research relevance as well as provides an

enlightening route on managerial intellectual development by practicing managers. The writer refers to the following writings so as to indicate why this is an important topic in contemporary management research and practices:

- “During the last 10 years, private-sector and public sector organizations have come under increased pressure to do more with less. In an effort to increase the efficiency of human resource-related activities, human resources professionals may have initiated new practices that were not adequately developed or evaluated..... As a result, some HR professionals and their organizations are using HR practices that do not contribute positively to organizational functioning and may be unaware of HR-related research findings that could assist in enhancing organizational functioning..” (Burke *et al.*, 2004).
- “findings from academic as well as consulting studies are not useful to practitioners” (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006).
- “Professors... have too little incentive to produce usable research...” (The Economist, 2014).

In the writer’s view, these problems indicate both a management knowledge transfer and a managerial intellectual learning problem. The Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research addresses these problems raised on management research and managerial intellectual learning. It is explained in the ensuing discussion.

### **An updated account of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based Research**

The MPSB Research was launched in 1992; it has been mainly moulded by the writer’s management education background and working experience in systems thinking, accounting,

information systems and supply chain management (Ho, 1996a; 1996b). From the outset, the research aim was to investigate management disciplines from a Critical Systems Thinking (CST) perspective (Jackson, 2000, Part III). For Ellis (1995), there are four main features of CST: (a) it seeks to show social awareness; (b) it is dedicated to human emancipation; (c) it is committed to complementary and informed use of all systems methodologies, and (d) it seeks to demonstrate critical awareness. An updated account by Jackson (2010) on CST identifies three CST commitments, i.e. 'critical awareness, pluralism and improvement.

The original focus of CST, as operationalised in the form of the Total Systems Intervention (TSI) approach of Flood and Jackson (1991), was on organizational intervention and problem solving, with the CST practitioner as a 'holistic doctor' (Jackson, 2010). This CST focus is different from that of the MPSB Research. Ho (2013c) defines the MPSB Research as "A research programme that makes use of Critical Systems Thinking to review management disciplines with a view to develop knowledge structures of management disciplines as a path to make theoretical advancements in Systems Thinking", with the MPSB practitioner as an MPSB management knowledge constructor. [There are other CST theorists who review management disciplines based on CST, see Jackson (2010); their works share more research interest with the MPSB Research.] Over time, 12 key MPSB concepts have been identified in the MPSB Research, namely: (1) the MPSB Research, (2) MPSB Frameworks, (3) Perspectives, (4) A perspective switch, (5) A migration of perspective, (6) Perspective anchoring, (7) An MPSB rich picture building exercise, (8) An MPSB knowledge compiler, (9) The in-built tension of pluralism, (10) MPSB cognitive filter for management, (11) Enlightening management education, and (12) Key MPSB concepts. These MPSB concepts, which themselves need further investigation, have been found to be

useful in the conduct of the MPSB Research (Ho, 2013c). In terms of areas of investigation, four have been identified, namely:

- a. Review the theoretical foundation of the MPSB Research and the nature of MPSB Frameworks<sup>1</sup>, see Ho (1994a; 1995a; 1995b; 1996a). It is recognized that CST, as the present theoretical foundation of the MPSB Research, is also evolving as a strand of systems thinking (see Jackson, 2010) - CST itself is not yet a finished intellectual product.
- b. Review management disciplines, namely, information systems management (e.g. Ho, 1997a; 2014a; Ho and Sculli, 1993; 1994a; 1995; Sculli and Ho, 2001), management accounting (e.g. Ho 1994b: 2014b), logistics management (e.g. Ho 1995c; 1997b), organizational change (e.g. Ho and Sculli, 1994b; Ho, Partington and Sculli, 1996) from the perspective of the MPSB Research.
- c. Review issues that are related to the MPSB Research, e.g. (i) building up a rich picture facing the MPSB Research program; (ii) explaining how the MPSB Research can contribute to management education and managerial intellectual learning (e.g. Ho, 2007; 2008; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014c; 2014d); and (iii) investigating how the MPSB Research is related to other systems-based research programs (e.g. Ho, 1995d) and topics, such as CST and TSI, as well as the rich picture building (RPB) exercise in Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology.
- d. Conduct case study research using the key MPSB concepts as part of an *MPSB cognitive filter for*

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<sup>1</sup> *An MPSB Framework* is a knowledge structure of a management discipline, or certain related concepts thereof, that is generated as a result of an intellectual review of it (or them) based on Critical Systems Thinking (Ho, 2013c).

*management*<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Ho (2014a)).

The MPSB Research conducts literature review on a management topic or a management discipline at three levels: (i) at the theoretical level; (ii) at the methodological level, and (iii) at the application level (Ho, 1997a). At the theoretical level, at present, there are three perspectives considered in the MPSB Research: the Unitary (objective) perspective endorses the organizational metaphors of brain, organism and brain; the Pluralist (subjective) perspective favors the organizational metaphors of culture and political system; finally, the Critical (emancipatory) perspective embraces the organizational metaphors of political systems and instrument of domination. The updated version of CST has four perspectives, namely, functionalist, interpretive, emancipator and postmodern (Jackson, 2010) perspectives. In view of this change in CST, the MPSB Research is need of an update in the near future. The specific context that triggers an MPSB Research initiative can be an academic who notices an emerging management topic from reading business journals that has significant academic and practical value; or a manager whose company is about to launch a major management project, such as an introduction of balanced scorecard system or business process outsourcing and who feels perplexed about this management technology. A major practice in an MPSB Research exercise is to construct an MPSB Framework in the following way (Ho, 1997b): (i) select a specific management approach or practice, e.g. Business Process Re-engineering; (ii) identify and expose the underlying image(s) of organization (Morgan, 1986) and perspective(s) of the management approach, and contrast them with alternative images of organization and perspectives; finally, (iii) construct the MPSB Framework and elucidate the nature of the

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<sup>2</sup> An *MPSB cognitive filter for management* is “a set of inter-related MPSB concepts that are used by managers to make sense of the various management approaches and management viewpoints that they encounter from time to time in the world of management practices” (Ho, 2013c).

management approach under review.

The MPSB Framework construction process has been called an MPSB knowledge compilation, with the review steps involved as an MPSB knowledge compiler (Ho, 1996b; 2013c). The analogies of a compiler and an operating system (or just called platform) in computer science are used here. Specifically, a compiler is a program that translates a high level program into machine code while an operating system is a program that performs a set of tasks to control a computer's resources. In employing these analogies in the MPSB Research, there is a job of taking in the concepts/ techniques from various management disciplines as source codes, and compiling them into software solutions (e.g. in the form of MPSB Frameworks) that are able to function on the CST platform. This job amounts to a literature review exercise. An MPSB framework so constructed can be perceived as an "assembled product" (and a conceptual one for that) that is able to be used by "the customers" (i.e. the managers) in a usable form; thus the "assembled product" is "useful", in Markides (2011)'s words. For this writer, this MPSB Framework can have relevance and actionable value to the manager who uses it, depending also on the managerial intellectual competence of the person who constructs the framework. [Note: the research topic of how an MBSB Framework is to work with other diagramming techniques such as a mind map or a cognitive map to make up a "comprehensive assembled product" has not been explicitly studied so far.]

An important distinction between the MPSB Research and CST/TSI project is that the former shows a greater propensity to maintain the identity of the various management disciplines while the latter, being supradisciplinary in orientation, is more inclined to oppose such a conciliatory stance. [Admittedly, contemporary management disciplines, e.g. management accounting and human resource management, are inter-disciplinary in nature, thus quite problem-solving in focus; still, they are not transdisciplinary.] Because of its more

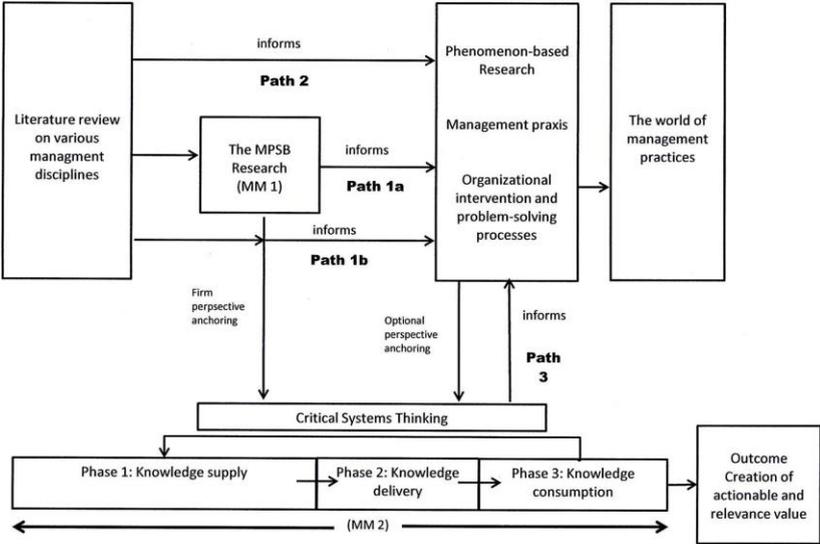
supportive position towards the identity of management disciplines, the MPSB Research has certain pragmatic, though minor, advantages over the CST/TSI project: (i) it provides a more receptive forum for exchanging ideas between systems theorists and professionals in various management disciplines; and (ii) due to its focus on management disciplines, it has a more ready access to opportunities to get involved in management projects that introduce a chosen management methodology/ technique, such as Business Process Re-engineering, from a particular management discipline to an organization. Furthermore, Ho (1996b) argued that the MPSB Research can be considered intellectually stimulating in that: (i) new research questions are raised and examined, and (ii) existing management concepts are reviewed and re-combined. In retrospect, the 1996 vision on the MPSB Research, its related research guidelines and research agenda, as recorded in the consolidated Ph.D. thesis of Ho (1996b), remains largely intact in 2014. Regardless, the relevance and actionable value of the MPSB Research has not been explicated in the 1996 version of the MPSB Research. The ensuing discussion in this paper tries to redress this deficiency.

### **Using an MPSB knowledge supply chain framework to study the MPSB Research**

The main literature on the MPSB Research has been consolidated in Ho (1996b), which is the writer's Ph.D. thesis. Additional scholarly works since 1996 focus mainly on the key MPSB concept of Enlightening Management Education (EME), which had not been examined before 2007. Apparently, the management learning and education sector as we now have is different from that in 1996. For examples, we now have the digital social media ecosystem, an explosion of online data, information and knowledge and more aggressive and innovative business school models around the world. They were not quite

there in the early 90s. To provide an updated evaluation of the MPSB Research, with special regard to the concern on management research relevance, an MPSB knowledge supply chain framework is developed. This framework is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: An MPSB knowledge supply chain framework



Referring to Figure 1, the beginning step for the MPSB Research is literature review, which is a major topic in management research, see, for example, Saunders *et al.* (2012; Chapter 3) and Bryman and Bell (2007; Chapter 4). [Note: there are other tasks to perform when formulating a management research proposal such as explaining the research context, research concerns, research objectives and research questions, etc., besides conducting the literature review. These other tasks are not further examined here.] With the initial literature review on management disciplines as the starting point, there are two main paths, i.e. Paths 1 and 2, to conduct literature

review-informed management praxis<sup>3</sup> and practice-oriented management research. [Note: Path 3 does not involve literature review on (functional) management disciplines. It does involve literature review on management research methods based on CST, see, for examples, Levin (1994) and Flood (2010).] Path 1 involves using Critical Systems Thinking (CST) as the underlying theoretical perspective (Path 1a being MPSB Research based and Path 1b being non-MPSB Research based) while Path 2 is a conventional literature review as explained in Business Research Methods textbooks without the employment of CST. Bentley, Cao and Lehaney (2013) and Gregory (1995) are examples related to Path 1b. Both Paths 1 and 2 benefit from an initial literature review, which, as Strauss and Corbin (1990; Chapter 3) remind us, heightens the researcher's theoretical sensitivity in practice-oriented management research. The MPSB Research has a firm *perspective anchoring*<sup>4</sup> on Critical Systems Thinking and has its own set of key MPSB concepts to use in literature review for Path 1a.

As depicted in Figure 1, there are organizational intervention and problem-solving processes, such as the Total Systems Intervention (TSI) methodology of Flood and Jackson (1991) that are theoretically grounded on CST, while others are not. It is also feasible to evaluate practice-oriented management research methods or organizational intervention processes based on CST without doing an MPSB Research in a specific case study (identified as Path 3). Nevertheless, a reported CST-based (Path 3) case study can subsequently be re-interpreted based on MPSB thinking to generate MPSB management knowledge, see, for example, Ho (1995b). All the paths (Paths 1-3) require managerial intellectual learning (Ho,

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<sup>3</sup> *Management praxis* is the process by which a management theory “becomes lived experience” via “reflective contemplation” (Stephenson, Jr. and Christensen, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> *Perspective anchoring*, as a key MPSB concept, is the “intellectual effort to explicitly relate a methodology to a particular perspective so that it explicitly respects the rationality of such a perspective” (Ho, 2013c).

2013b) by managers, either by themselves or with others, e.g. academics and consultants, in a collaborative mode of learning and problem-solving. Thus, these management research approaches and the accompanying managerial learning process, as represented by Paths 1 to 3, should be appealing to academics, practicing managers, management consultants and scholar-practitioners who are committed to continuous professional development. Table 1 provides a comparison of the three management research paths in table form.

	<i>Path 1a</i>	<i>Path 1b</i>	<i>Path 2</i>	<i>Path 3</i>
<i>Based on CST</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Based on the MPSB Research</i>	Yes	No	No	No
<i>Literature review on management disciplines carried out</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

**Table 1: A comparison of the three management research paths in Figure 1**

As Path 1a involves managerial intellectual learning with the MPSB Research, it is able to enhance the *MPSB cognitive filter for management*<sup>5</sup> in a specific organizational setting who, for examples, are conducting management praxis or an action research, etc.. The MPSB Research, with Path 1a, can also be employed in a Phenomenon-based Research (von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, and Haefliger, 2012), which is also noted in Figure 1. [Phenomenon-based Research “tackles problems that are relevant to management practices” and “scientific discourse” (von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, and Haefliger, 2012), thus falling within the scope of the MBSB knowledge supply chain framework.] Phenomenon-based Research, management praxis

<sup>5</sup> *MPSB cognitive filter for management*, as a key MPSB concept, is “a set of inter-related MPSB concepts that are used by managers to make sense of the various management approaches and management viewpoints that they encounter from time to time in the world of management practices” (Ho, 2013c).

and organizational intervention/ problem-solving processes are chosen because of their direct involvement in creating relevant, useful and actionable management knowledge (Heracleous and DeVogue, 1998). There are other management research methods, based on positivism, that are mainly concerned with producing generalizable management knowledge with external validity (Wikipedia, 2014a); these management research methods, being non-practice-oriented, hold much less interest and ability in producing relevant and actionable management knowledge; therefore, they are outside the scope of direct academic interest in the MPSB knowledge supply chain framework and are ignored in Figure 1. Figure 1 compartmentalizes the MPSB Research and related management research into 3 phases of a proposed MPSB knowledge supply chain framework. **The framework views all the activities related to the MPSB Research as a set of related knowledge management processes forming a knowledge supply chain to produce relevant and actionable management knowledge for consumption.** Its primary focus is on Path 1a, but is appreciative of the intellectual contribution from the other paths. The three phases and the outcome variable of the framework are described as follows:

*Phase 1- MPSB knowledge supply:* This phase mainly covers the conduct of literature review on management disciplines based on the MPSB Research. In Knowledge Management parlance (e.g., Probst *et al.*, 2000), this phase covers mainly *knowledge development* (1.1) and *knowledge retention* (1.2). As the terminology used in Knowledge Management is primarily employed in the context of management practices, it is not expressed in a way for Management Research discussion. For this reason, the writer produces a set of Knowledge Management terms that are adapted, some revised significantly, from Probst *et al.* (2000) specifically for management research study. They are presented

in Table 2.

<b>KM terms</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>Knowledge development</b> [MPSB knowledge supply phase (1.1)]	Efforts to generate new management knowledge via management research.
<b>Knowledge retention</b> [MPSB knowledge supply phase (1.2)]	Efforts to store and update management knowledge from management research and management practices, mainly in codified form.
<b>Knowledge sharing/ distribution</b> [MPSB knowledge delivery phase (2)]	Efforts to (i) make management knowledge accessible and (ii) promote management knowledge to potential users, such as practicing managers, management consultants and academics.
<b>Knowledge identification</b> [MPSB knowledge consumption phase (3.1)]	Efforts to (i) find out what management knowledge is relevant to a concern in the world of management practices and (ii) locate its sources for access.
<b>Knowledge acquisition</b> [MPSB knowledge consumption phase (3.2)]	Efforts to take possession of management knowledge that has been recognized as relevant to addressing a concern in the world of management practices.
<b>Knowledge utilization</b> [MPSB knowledge consumption phase (3.3)]	Efforts to learn and apply management knowledge made available from knowledge acquisition.

**Table 2: Knowledge management (KM) terms used in Management Research study**

To date, the writer has been focusing on the *knowledge supply phase* (1.2) of the knowledge supply chain framework with some *knowledge delivery phase* (Phase 2) activity; the knowledge supply phase mainly comprises scholarly activities on developing and publishing new management knowledge in peer-reviewed journals. Phase 1 on MPSB knowledge supply is expected to be mainly carried out by academics or scholar-practitioners (Ho, 2014d).

*Phase 2 - MPSB knowledge delivery:* This phase mainly deals with *knowledge sharing/ distribution* (2). Phase 2 is primarily carried out by academics, teachers, management gurus and management consultants. This can involve the cultural circuit of capitalism (CCC) (Seal, 2010). [The cultural circuit of capitalism (CCC) involves management gurus, management consultants, professional bodies, practicing managers, business schools in a cultural circuit to promote and

deliver management knowledge (Seal, 2010).] As the writer is neither a management guru nor a management consultant, at present MPSB knowledge delivery is done via part-time teaching at some business schools in Hong Kong, publication in academic journals and sharing of MPSB ideas via the digital social media platform (Ho, 2013a). For Markides (2011), communicating research findings and distributing academic articles to students contribute to “managerially relevant research”; from this perspective, this writer’s teaching and publication works, as covered in the knowledge delivery phase, are able to improve MPSB Research relevance too. MPSB knowledge delivery can also take place when a management researcher, acting as an advisor on the subject of the MPSB Research, collaborates with other participants in a practice-oriented management research.

*Phase 3 - MPSB knowledge consumption:* This phase deals with *knowledge identification (3.1)*, *knowledge acquisition (3.2)* and *knowledge utilization (3.3)*. The activities in Phase 3 are initiated by users of management knowledge, who are mainly practicing managers, with academics, teachers and management consultants acting as coaches, facilitators and trainers. The MPSB Research does not offer methodologies on organizational intervention and problem-solving per se. When the MPSB Research is employed to inform Phenomenon-based Research, management praxis and organizational intervention by heightening theoretical sensitivity on related management discipline notions, managerial intellectual learning takes place and the *MPSB cognitive filter of management* is enhanced; various management concepts and techniques are assembled into MPSB Frameworks (together with other forms of diagrams, see Open University (2014).) that are decision-focused and context-relevant. All in all, the MPSB Research, sharing the aspiration of Action Research (Coghlan and Shani, 2013), supports scholarship of practice. Ideally, the writer could involve his university dissertation students to conduct MPSB

Research projects (via Path 1a), thus counting as MPSB knowledge consumption as well as contributing to the theoretical development of the MPSB Research. In practice, most of the writer's Undergraduate and Postgraduate students are not yet intellectually capable to do so. Making use of the MPSB Research to conduct Phenomenon-based Research by the writer (or academics who are interested in the MPSB Research), on the other hand, is quite feasible. Interesting phenomena related to management practices can be investigated from time to time via study of business/professional journals, newspapers and Internet search as well as heeding practicing managers' concerns in their work settings. [Many of the writer's part-time students are practicing managers.] Finally, it is quite feasible to make use of the MPSB Research to examine reported management cases, e.g. those from *South Asian Journal of Business Management Cases* (Sage publications) and *Asian Journal of Management Cases* (Sage publications) by practitioners as a limited form of MPSB knowledge consumption, though studying reported management cases is much inferior to working on a live management case in the real world. It is because in a live management case study, participants are able to properly carry out practice-oriented management research, e.g. an actual organizational change for an Action Research project.

*MPSB knowledge supply chain outcome:* When the MPSB Research is employed in management praxis and management research with managers' engagement, the *relevance* of the MPSB Research findings and the actionable value of the MPSB Research are thus established for these managers. Such *actionable management knowledge* is able to meet the assessment criteria in both management research as well as the business needs of one or more organizations. This view on *actionable management knowledge* is derived from Tenkasi and Hay (2004) whose original term is "actionable scientific knowledge". The *relevance* quality is important as it is "widely

attributed to research that closes the gap between theory and practice” (Brownlie and Saren, 1997), and closing the theory-practice gap is an aspiration of the MPSB Research. To realize the expected MPSB knowledge supply chain outcome, it must be emphasized, engaging managerial intellectual learning efforts have to be made by its practitioners, who act as scholar-practitioners.

While Figure 1 depicts the MPSB knowledge supply chain as comprising three phases, it should be clear that, due to its practice-orientation, some of the knowledge processes are concurrent, e.g. knowledge development, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization all take place at the same time. Having introduced the MPSB knowledge supply chain framework, it is now ripe to distinguish between two MPSB Research modes:

- Mode 1 (MM 1) concentrates on Phases 1 and 2 of the knowledge supply chain,
- Mode 2 (MM 2) covers the whole knowledge supply chain.

Table 1 is solely related to MM 1. So far, all the MPSB Research works have been related to MM 1. MM 2 is at an embryonic stage only – which is an unsatisfactory status for the MPSB Research. The present defense by this writer is that Phase 3 of the knowledge supply chain has been taken care of by those who are interested in Action Research, organizational intervention processes, Phenomenon-based Research and management praxis. But then, exactly how MM 1 could inform Phase 3 of the knowledge supply chain is not quite clear, yet vital as a research question. Certainly, textbooks on Management Research do explain what are the benefits as well as how to conduct literature review; but they do not explain how to conduct MPSB literature review and how MPSB literature review inform subsequent practice-oriented management research.

## **An overall assessment on the MPSB Research**

Making use of Management Research concepts, the nature of the MPSB Research can be more clearly explained:

- Transfield (2002) discusses two types of management research, called MK1 and MK2: For MK1, problems are “set and solved by the academic community, using a disciplinary staff base patrolled by elite academic gate keepers called professors, based in institutionalized research organizations such as universities...” while, for MK2, “methods of knowledge production” that endorse a soft, applied, divergent, and rural orientation in management research are employed (Transfield, 2002). The MPSB Research sides more with M2K than M1K (Transfield, 2002).
- Katri *et al.* (2012) discern 3 types of management research, i.e., (i) practice-oriented research, (ii) positivist research, and (iii) nostalgic research. In the case of the MPSB Research, it mainly supports practice-oriented research, rather than positivist research or nostalgic research.
- Furthermore, Katri *et al.* (2012) identify 3 main criteria to evaluate management research, namely, (i) correspondence, (ii) consistence, and (iii) practicality or relevance. Regarding the MPSB Research, it favors (ii) consistency (i.e. to be consistent with Critical Systems Thinking) and (iii) relevance, while placing a lower priority on (i) correspondence (i.e. “the extent to which a theory relies on observations from the phenomenon of interest for its truth value” (Katri *et al.*, 2012).)

The response of the present MPSB Research by the writer to the *theory-practice gap* (i.e. the relevance concern) can be related to the three aspects of the *theory-practice gap* as

identified by Van de Ven and Johnson (2006):

- Aspect 1: As a knowledge transfer problem - the MPSB Research response: translating and diffusing the MPSB Research knowledge is currently done via (i) publications in academic journals, (ii) e-learning support to students in the digital social media, and (iii) teaching and dissertation project supervision to business administration students. Knowledge transfer can also be facilitated via collaborative mode of management research such as Action Research and practice-oriented research which the MPSB Research favors.
- Aspect 2: Knowledge of theory and knowledge of practice are fundamentally distinct kinds of knowledge – the MPSB Research response: the MPSB Research is mainly interested in practice-oriented research; it embraces a view of knowledge of theory and practice that is inter-related, possessing three related parts of complexity, i.e. the natural world complexity, the social world complexity and the internal world complexity (Midgley, 1992). Based on this view, this writer maintains that knowledge of theory and practice are not fundamentally distinct; nevertheless, in university dissertation report writing, it is a good practice, as the University of Greenwich of UK does, to ask a dissertation project student to produce 2 reports, namely, one dissertation report for the academics and one consultancy report for the management in a client company, based on one dissertation project. In this case, dissertation students are taught both the subjects of Management Research and Management Consulting (Wickham, 2004; Sadler, 2007).
- Aspect 3: As a knowledge production problem – the MPSB Research response: Concurring with Van de Ven and Johnson (2006), the MPSB Research favors methods of “engaged scholarship in which researchers and practitioners coproduce knowledge that can advance theory and practice

in a given domain” (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006). Also, Phenomenon-based Research-cum-MPSB Research (Path 1a) can be carried out by management researchers with a scholar-practitioner mindset to address this knowledge production problem. This makes up a future research topic for the MPSB Research.

So far, the MPSB Research is able to be conducted without external funding; it can be done by a team of collaborators or by individual aspiring scholar-practitioners, who are working in the industry or at universities. [Nevertheless, presently, the MPSB Research does not catch the attention of the academic community – it remains a single-person management research venture.] It does require access to academic and business journals, textbooks in business management, and the Internet as well as intellectual efforts from its practitioners. As a scholarly activity, it is important to share the findings from the MPSB Research with peers via publication in academic journals. Conducting the MPSB Research is a form of personal managerial intellectual learning in systems thinking (Ho, 2013b). Those who build up stronger managerial intellectual competence via continuous and committed managerial intellectual learning are able to produce better quality MPSB Research findings and vice versa.

### **Concluding remarks**

Having worked on the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research for more than 20 years, the writer finds it ripe to provide a review of its research status. This has been done in this paper. Making use of the MPSB knowledge supply chain framework, the writer argues that the MPSB Research has management research relevance and is capable of producing actionable management knowledge. Nevertheless, there is a task to do research work on MM 2. Specifically, there

is a need to investigate **how to design the MPSB knowledge supply chain process so that users are able to experience the consumption of usable knowledge products in practice-oriented management research and management praxis**, with the term *usable* [the noun is *usability* (Wikipedia, 2014b)] from the *usability engineering* discipline, meaning (i) easy to use, (ii) easy to learn and (iii) enjoyable to use. In this case, this *usability* criterion incorporates the *relevant*, *actionable* and *useful* research quality criteria in the current management research literature to make up a more coherent criterion. If the MPSB Researcher is an *MPSB management knowledge constructor* for MM 1, then this person is expected to be an *MPSB user experience manager* for MM 2.

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