

In terms uncluttered

By EON SMIT

It is generally agreed that business schools are required to create value in three dimensions – personal value for our clients through our programmes, social value for the wider community through the building and distribution of intellectual capital, and academic value through our research activities.

Over the past decade knowledgeable commentators have been less than kind to business schools in terms of their performance in the realm of research.

Bennis and O'Toole questioned the relevance of research undertaken at business schools, while Ghoshal criticised schools for suffering from 'physics envy' and therefore reverting to a scientific model that delivered results reflecting only a pretence of knowledge.

Some critics alluded to the fact that business problems are of a high order with complex interactions, but that research frequently set out from a single-discipline premise.

Porter criticised business school



Image: Fotosearch

research for not shedding light on future best practices because of a retro-active research agenda.

Whatever their point of departure, commentators seemed to agree that the research findings were not presented in a format accessible to business people, nor published in journals read by the business community.

While business schools are obliged to pass the strictest tests for scientific rigour when publishing in international business journals, this

does not relieve them of the obligation to inform the world of business about the results of their research quests.

Paraphrasing Heisenberg, the great physicist, a life has not been worthwhile, if, at the end of it, one cannot explain to everybody what one has been doing.

While heeding all these points of critique when setting out our own research agenda – and understanding that the international research community demands certain standards to which we must adhere – we can positively respond by telling everybody what we have been doing in terms uncluttered by the esoterics of the scientific method.

We trust you will find that the research results published here contribute to knowledge and understanding, are value-adding and relevant, but, most of all, are accessible. ■



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