TRUTH THEORIES AND PHILOSOPHICAL COMMITMENTS IN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

Sulhaini*)

Abstrak


Kata kunci: correspondence theory of truth, nihilism, consensus theory of truth, positivism, postmodernism, critical theory

1. Introduction

Scientific truth has become a central debate among philosophers especially in social science. The questions of "what is scientific truth", is there a scientific truth" and "how can we attain the truth" have been discussed and explored by philosophers. The questions might be related to our attempt to pursue science. By some philosophers, science is related to production of a body of knowledge and represents the truth about social phenomena. Also, science is argued to have two pillars, namely rationality and observation. Therefore, a scientific understanding of the world must make sense and correspond with what we observe (Babbie, 1995). This implies science must be logically attained and is regarded to be able to produce truth about natural and social phenomena. Science allows us to discover ultimate reality and universal truth. Success or failure in scientific enquiry seems to depend upon achievement on truth (Babbie, 1995). Hence, truth seems to be the aim or goal of scientific enquiry and truth achievement has a crucial role to play in science development. However, other philosophical positions may reject these and argue that their view about truth and science are different. Therefore, truth is seen as a 'problematic' notion in philosophy of social science debate, and philosophers have conceived it in different ways.

This derives a need to understand both philosophical positions and truth theories. William and May (2000) have illustrated the important of philosophical commitment and truth theory in social research as follows: "... philosophical commitments have a direct bearing on the manner in which research is conducted and the types of validity and reliability then obtained in its results. This of course, relates to the generation of "truth" (William and May, p: 140). Accordingly, Easterby-Smith et al (2000) argue that philosophical choice in management or other social research is an important issue since

*) Staf pengajar Jurusan Manajemen Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Mataram
failure to think this will seriously affect the quality of the research. They propose three reasons why an understanding of philosophical issues is very useful. First, it can help to clarify research design. Second, knowledge of philosophy can help us to recognize which design will work and which will not. Third, knowledge of philosophy can help us to identify, create and design what may be outside of our past experience. The philosophy of science is essentially theory concerning the nature of knowledge, activities to produce knowledge and conceptions of the nature of reality; whether it is phenomena of mind or matter (Potter, 2000).

William and May (2000) said that the philosophy of science is about asking and answering the question "what is science". In other words, the philosophy is both description of what science is and a prescription of what it should be. They argue that it is important for scientists to understand what science is in order to reproduce and refine it. Simply, scientists would have to know what science is in order to practice it. An understanding of "what science really is" guides scientists to evaluate claims to scientificity and claim to truth (Potter, 2000). Philosophy is concerned to know what kinds of things exist in our world and what our warrant to know them is. While social inquiries are concerned with their knowable properties. Further, in terms of ontological and epistemological positions, a position will have direct impact on what we can claim on scientific truth, and methodological decisions are implicitly ontological and epistemological (William and May, 2000). The positions entail commitment to knowledge constituting assumptions about the nature of truth (Johnson and Clark, 2006). Therefore, this paper will examine three main philosophical positions, which propose different theories of truth and discuss the consequences of adopting each position in management research.

Regarding ontological and epistemological we can draw various philosophical positions, which reject each other view about scientific truth. Positivist position applies the principle of natural science to the study of people; this is however rejected by phenomenological positions, which appreciate different constructions and meaning of people experience. The latter position denies application of natural science into social science (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000). We may see social science and natural science have both similarities and differences. Natural science is intended to explore objects while social science is to explore subjects and human being (Wolfgang, 2000). Hence, we should carefully consider our approach to study our social world, and then we need to look at the nature of each position, which underline the claims to science and truth. Through utilising the correct approach we can be sure that what we have found is true, reliable and valid. Nevertheless, we should be aware that claim to science is not identical with claims to truth, but a claim to scientific status enhances the credibility of truth claims if the scientific status can be justified (Potter, 2000).

Various theories about truth have been proposed. For example: correspondence theory, coherence theory, convergence theory, deflationary theory, pragmatist theory, substantive theory and consensus theory among others. These theories might imply various philosophical positions or traditions. However, this paper is not intended to articulate all theories, indeed the author discuss three main positions and theories about scientific truth, which are widely employed in management researches.

2. Discussion

The discussion on the philosophical positions will begin with the discussion on positivism, which possesses correspondence theory of truth. This position has been under attack by other views such as postmodernism and critical theory philosophers. Thus, it is crucial to understand the basic principles of positivism in order to understand philosophy of social science debate. Furthermore, postmodernism and critical theory will be articulated and critised.

2.1 Positivism and Correspondence Theory of Truth

Abbagano (1967) stated that positivism stresses science is the only valid knowledge, science is a truth driven and truth is the main goal of every research activity in natural and social sciences, also facts are the only possible object of knowledge (cf. Wolfgang, 2000). Philosopher Augustus Comte compounds Hume's empiricism and Descartes's rationalism into positivism. It is basically a sub-species or variant of empiricism, which locates the source of knowledge in human experience (Potter, 2000).
Empiricism is more influential in the development of science because of its stress upon human activity and sensory observation. Thus, measurement and experimentation are held to be central features of scientific practice (Potter, 2000). In addition, Descartes’s argument was the importance of rational justification as the basis of valid knowledge. He explained that only something, which survives systematic scepticism, has rational justification (Johnson and Daberley, 2000). Thus, rational justification seems to be the route for us to arrive at truth and gain knowledge.

Positivist stressed that human activity should be understood as observable. Social phenomena are viewed as a complex phenomenon, which entails a complex of causal relations among a large number of variables. This means that researchers might face tough tasks to arrive at truth. However, it becomes possible to select a few of researchers’ favorites as the basic causes or explanatory variables (Blaocks, 1979). Therefore, researchers can reduce the complexity into the simplest relations so that they are able to understand social phenomena. The causes of human behaviour are regarded as being external to the individual. In addition, positivists view knowledge as the product of sensory experience by means of experimental or comparative analysis and concepts, and that is the result of observation (Blakie, 1995).

Positivists view our understanding of natural science can be well applied to social science, and thus we can predict events in social world, which is assumed to have regularities as we see natural phenomena (Potter, 2000). Once we uncover the regularities then we can formulate our prediction by using quantitative methods as we do in study of natural world. This is depicted by the following logical positivism.

Logical positivists see that the task of science is to enable the prediction and control of social and natural events. As such it produces instrumentally useful knowledge (Johnson and Daberley, 2000, p.26).

Positivists see that social phenomena are predictable and causal relationships among variables are simply deterministic.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2000) argued that the main idea of positivism is the social world exists independently and its properties should be measured through objective method, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. In addition, they concluded positivism principles as follows:

a. Independence: the observer is independence of what is being observed.

b. Value freedom: the choice of what to study, and how to study it can be determined by objective criteria rather than by human belief and interest.

c. Causality: the aim of social science should identify causal explanations and fundamental laws that explain regularities in human social behaviour.

d. Hypothetico-deductive: science proceeds through a process of hypothesising fundamental laws and then deducting what kinds of observations will demonstrate the truth or falsity of these hypotheses.

e. Operationalism: concept need to be operationalised in a way which enables fact to be measured quantitatively.

f. Reductionism: problems as a whole are better understood if they are reduced into the simplest possible element.

g. Generalisation: in order to be able to generalise about regularities in human and social behaviour it is necessary to select samples of sufficient size.

h. Cross-sectional analysis: making comparisons of variations across samples can most easily identify such regularities.

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2000, p. 29)

The first principle implies that observers cannot interfere what is being observed (reality) and the observer can attain scientific truth if their mind can objectively reflect the reality. This implies the first epistemological commitment of positivism:
Logical positivist believed that observation of the empirical world — through our sense — provides the only foundation for knowledge. Their version of empiricism entails the claim that such observation can be neutral, value-free and objective (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p. 23).

In sum, observers passively study the fact or reality of natural or social world in order to find truth. The basic belief for positivist lies on the statement of the world is external and observers should be separated from what is being observed and thus being objective or neutral is an ideal method for research and science is value-free. For positivists, there is a possibility to reduce phenomena to the simplest element in order to understand complex phenomena; however, researchers should take a large number of samples. Researchers formulate hypothesis and test them with sophisticated statistical tools thus facts are measured quantitatively. Hence, they should be equipped with statistical procedures in measuring what reality presents. They should attempt to obtain data and avoid opinion then look for regularities or causality in the data. Therefore, it seems that positivism hold the assumption of neutral observational language in which the researcher is construed as a neutral conduit of sense-data who can objectively elucidate and present the facts of empirical world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000).

Newell (1986) claimed that objectivity as being desirable quality and objectivity become a quality of character applied or withheld on the evidence of what researcher do. Objectivity is regarded as a product of proper method and the price of objectivity is a public methodology subjecting scientific statements to the test of independent and impartial criteria. Moreover, he argued that objectiveness is identified by a respect for certain norms, which are standards of evidence and argument regulating ways of resolving disputes, settling issues and deciding beliefs. Hence, positivists put a great emphasis on objectivity when doing research and objectivity is seen as an ideal method in studying social phenomena or human behaviour.

Chalmers (1982) stated that scientific knowledge is reliable knowledge because it is objectively proven knowledge. He described the formulation of scientific theories as follows:

- Derived in some rigorous way from the facts of experience acquired by observation and experiment. Science is based on what we can see, hear and touch, etc. Personal opinion or preferences and speculative imaginings have no place in science. Science is objective (cf. William and May, 2000, p. 15).

This shows that positivists put objective observation and experiment as the only way to obtain science. Further, positivists claim the importance of facts that is usually seen to lie in the capacity to explain truth. According to Newell (1986), the evidence for the truth of a judgment about the world lies elsewhere than in its being asserted or believed. It is persuasively argued that whatever makes such a judgment true must have the same sort of independence from self as is credited to objective particulars in their role of outer objects, and its seem that facts alone can do this. Hence, facts consist of a set of objects, relations and properties that gives a judgment the truth-value. Also, it is to claim that a judgment is true by showing there is fact, which corresponds. Moreover, ‘human contribution’ undercut interpersonally neutral testing and permits the observers’ own beliefs onto the world; it seems to dodge the issue of rational control over the conclusions people may reach (Newell, 1986). According to Jackson and Carter (1995) characteristic of positivism tradition is science as a process for producing value free knowledge, which is achieved by adherence to methods which eliminate the possibility of subjective bias entering into process. And the output of the process is facts that are a statement of truth as opposed to a statement of belief or opinion, irrespective of how well-informed that belief or opinion may be. Thus, the power of science lies on its ability to reveal truth.

Positivists view knowledge as the product of sensory experience by means of experimental or comparative analysis and concepts, produced by observation (Blakie, 1989). However, researchers should take a large number of samples. Researchers formulate hypothesis and test them with sophisticated statistical tools. Facts are established quantitatively (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Hence, they should be equipped with statistical procedures to measure what reality presents. They should
attempt to obtain data and avoid opinions then look for regularities or causality in the data. It seems that positivism holds the assumption of a neutral observational language in which the researcher is construed as a neutral conduit of sense-data who can objectively elucidate and present the facts of the empirical world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000).

The basic belief of positivist rests on the assumption that the world is external and observers should be separated from what is being observed. This enables them to be objective or neutral, and promotes the ideal that research and science is value-free (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000). It seems that, positivists put a great emphasis on objectivity when doing research and objectivity is seen as an ideal method for studying social phenomena or human behaviour. This shows that positivists put objective observation and experiment as the only way to obtain reliable knowledge. Easterby-Smith et al. (2000) argued that the main idea of positivism is the social world exists independently and its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. The causes of human behaviour are regarded as being external to the individual. Positivism stresses that the observer is independent of what is being observed, that observers should interfere with what is being observed (reality) and that the observer can attain scientific truth if their mind can objectively reflect the reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000).

For positivists, there is an attempt to reduce phenomena to the simplest elements in order to understand how complex phenomena work. Positivism stresses that human activity should be understood through observable behaviour. Social phenomena are viewed as complex-phenomena, a complex of causal relations among a large number of variables. However, it becomes possible to select a few favourites of researchers' as the basic causes or explanatory variables (Blalock, 1970). Therefore, researchers can reduce the complexity into the simplest relations so that they are able to understand social phenomena. Positivism sees that social phenomena are predictable and causal relationships among variables are simply deterministic. Nevertheless, the explanation may be made more complex by including mediating variables: by saying that x causes y through the mediating variable w. Therefore, a causal explanation may contain both moderator and mediating variables and may contain many causes and effects so that the complexity of the explanation is increased (Donaldson, 2005).

Willower and Uline (2001) concluded that the reductionism assumptions in positivism are irrelevant in the social sciences. It seems that this paradigm will not lead the study to obtain a deeper understanding of complex phenomena in business relationship development and management. Following this paradigm will not lead the author to holistically explore mutual shaping influences to generate theory regarding the phenomena. Indeed, adopting the paradigm may result in a deterministic explanation of marketing management, and this was one of the criticisms of the current literature (Saadi, 2006). It seems that there is a need to use a different paradigm leading to a deeper exploration, which does not assume everything can be predicted. A wide range of issues can emerge and be investigated to enrich our understanding with regard to marketing management. The alternative paradigm should allow a greater insight into the complex knitting of variables affecting marketing management practice.

Positivism is not appropriate when dealing with subjective experience. Positivism is criticized for its view that research can be value-free: this is viewed as a naïve concept that masks the truth. Social science is not a value-freedom endeavor (Williams and May, 2000). It seems that positivism rejects human subjectivity in scientific inquiry.

We turn now to correspondence theory of truth. Correspondence theory of truth views that something is true if there is agreement with the fact or it is supported by the fact. This theory says that something true is all time. The theory requires something can be said to be true if and only if there must correspondence with the facts (Blakie, 1995). Thus the key idea of the theory is that truth is matter of correspondence with facts. This theory implies that a correspondence is posited between sensory experiences and the objects of those experiences, and between observation statements and theoretical statements (Blakie, 1995). In term of truth testing, Newell (1986) explained that there are two strategic moves: the shift to generality and the shift to pure perception. He argued that the objective control over judgments is sought in universal criteria and neutral observation, one looks up to premises or rules to
control identification and inference, and looks down to a base of sensory data to control truth-values. Both act as common measures for testing, which will be free from personal idiosyncrasy.

According to Russell (1976), correspondence theory of truth views truth of basic propositions depends upon their relation to some occurrence, and the truth of other propositions depend upon their syntactical relations to basic propositions. He also said that this theory has two different forms. First, the basic propositions must be derived from experience and therefore propositions, which cannot be suitably related to experience, are neither true nor false. Second, the basic propositions need not to be related to experience, but only to facts, though if they are not related to experience they cannot be known. The first form of the theory implies empiricism in positivism tradition while the second forms stress the importance of correspondence with the facts. However, facts are wider than experiences and an experience is a fact (Russell, 1976). Regarding the important of truth, Newell (1986) argued that truth is useful, and the idea of the utility of truth is little more than the reflection that the capacity of a belief system to say what is coming next and why, is an excellent measure of its truth-content. Further, he described the theory as follows:

A major attraction of correspondence theories is simply that this question is much less obvious one to ask, for the evidence of testing is independent of the beliefs to be tested (Newell, 1986, p.13).

In sum, correspondence theory of truth explains researchers can arrive at truth of a theory or proposition if it matches with facts, which are objectively assessable. Thus, researchers must be independent to the external reality or facts. Then, truth is dependent upon their neutrality observing social world. According to this theory, a theory can be accepted as true if it corresponds to facts, and thus truth understood as a correspondence to facts. This theory has a crucial role in positivism, which has a significant influence in the social and natural sciences. Although, this tradition has been increasingly attacked, however, it remains the dominant epistemological orientation of the management disciplines. Further, most reported and published research in the social sciences remains rooted in positivist epistemological commitments (Johnson and Duberly, 2000). Accordingly Potter (2000) stated that many social researches undertaken today could be said to be positivist. However, he also argued that we are now in a post-positive era as positivism has become increasingly unpopular.

Now, we turn to look at critiques toward positivism and the correspondence theory of truth. Positivists labeled their theory of truth as correspondence theory, which illustrates that something is true for all time. Social enquiry is aimed to obtain ultimate or fixed truth (William and May, 2000). Correspondence theory of truth is simply the idea that truth is a matter of the correspondence of theory and reality. This theory is vulnerable because it stressed the match of theory and reality, while science is about the match of theory and observation (Willower and Uline, 2001).

Anti positivism philosophers do not agree that human behaviour, though and selling are all determined and universal truth does not exist and will never be attained. This has been stressed by Willower and Uline as follows:

Related criticisms of science are that it seeks ultimate reality and final, universal truth and since neither has been demonstrated, science is flawed. Such criticisms are misleading because they are so blatantly incorrect. As an open, growing activity, one of the main characteristics and great strength of science is its self-corrective nature. In science, there are no final or universal truths, only theories that can be assessed using a variety of logical and evidentiary criteria, and subject to modification or replacement at any time. Similarly, the notion of an ultimate reality waiting to be uncovered and revealed by science is long out-of-date, a vestige of nineteenth century scientism (Willower and Uline, p. 457).

Gummesson (1991) argued that science is continuing search or continuing generation of theories, models, concept and categories. Thus research is a journey and not a destination. He described social research as a journey in which each program represent a temporary stop on the way, and where each
report is a point of departure for further inquiry. Social environments evolve over time, while scientific enquiry is human activity to find science of social world and thus science should be open, changing, not final, and dynamic as it has been proposed by positivists. Therefore, if we argue that our social science is static meaning that we have put it far behind our evolving world. Truth is not viewed as an absolute, nor as being readily knowable. Instead, truth is sought by replacing less true by truer theories, so that science moves towards the truth. In that sense, truth is relative, not absolute. Whether since ever attains the complete truth of a matter is unknown and unknowable, because there is no way to know truth other than through the theories. Therefore, all science can ever know is that present theories are better than previous ones (Donaldson, 2006).

Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1994) suggest that all our interpretations or theories are temporally limited in a dual sense. First, they are always provisional and never be established forever, their nature allows for endless elaboration and partial qualification. Second, they limited in time subject to current ideas, ideologies, etc. This indicates that theories will never exist forever; indeed they will be subject of rebuilding representing the development of certain phenomena in certain eras.

Williams and May (2000) concluded that correspondence theory of truth has two important difficulties. First, there is the logical problem of sentences, where we can achieve the truth of a sentence. However, one is not always true and never be established forever, their nature allows for endless elaboration and partial qualification. Second, there is also a problem about the constitution of the facts. Truth is agreement with the facts (only) when we can agree what the facts are, in other words, there is a question of what should count as the facts. Also, positivism is criticised in terms of the view on value freedom as a naïve concept, value freedom seems to be symptomatic of a desire to mask the truth. Social science is not a value-freedom endeavour (Williams and May, 2000).

Blaikie (1995) gives his critiques on the claim that experience can be a sound basis for scientific knowledge and science should deal only with observable phenomena and not with abstract or hypothetical entities. Thus, for positivists, it is possible to distinguish between an a-theoretical observation language and a-theoretical language. It is seemed that theoretical concept have a 1:1 (one to one) correspondence with reality as it is observed. The scientific laws are based on constant conjunction between events of social phenomena. He argued that positivism has simply taken for granted the socially constructed world, which other orientations regard as social reality. Positivism has inadequate view of the nature of social reality. Therefore, it might argue that, the correspondence theory of truth has a lack regarding the view of objective truth, which is the result of one-to-one correspondence between statements and reality. Positivism stresses that scientific truth must be obtained free of observers' interest and truth is directly connected to observation of a measured social world. However, other philosophical orientations suggest that it is not adequate to objectively study social phenomena and truth is not obtained from the objective measures and thus subjectivity in social enquiry is proposed. Tinkler (1997) suggests that social reality does not exist independent of human interpretation (cf. Montagn, 1997). Observers as human will have interest on the objects of their study and thus objectivity of observers cannot be guaranteed. It seems that human subjectivity has been neglected by the correspondence theory of truth and this is another lack of the tradition. Moreover, this theory ignores that observation as the way to assert truth is itself theory-laden (Potter, 2000). Our interpretation on a certain object may result at different interpretation upon it. Hence, in relation to truth, it is possible we will see different conclusions, which proceed from the same observation and thus universal truth or absolute seems to be impossible. A question arises as: “is there one truth? Maybe, maybe not. Given that the question is unanswerable, what is the point of the question? Science is about searching for the best approximation of truth, but this is not necessarily unified (Sinclair and Hogan, 2006) and thus there can be no ‘fixed’ truth or ‘final’ outcome (Johnson and Duberly, 2006).

2.2 Postmodernism and Nihilism

Postmodernism rejects positivism’s main arguments described above. Postmodernism denies the notions: fact and truth, which are perceived as irrelevant and imaginary. Simply, it denies the existence of truth. Thus, it rejects all theories about truth. Rosenau (1992) says that this tradition eschews epistemological assumptions, refutes methodological conventions, resists knowledge claims, obscures
all version of truth and dismisses policy recommendations. However, it is pointed out, that is itself an epistemological position. Postmodernism stresses that science belongs to the language game that provides description and explanations of how things are. Hence, language is very crucial to postmodernism position and science is dependent upon a different sort of language game from its own to legitimate itself as a human activity (Potter, 2000). Language is a powerful tool that shapes individual ideas, while individual shapes language (Wright, 1994). Postmodernism has less emphasis on the social science and is more concern on language and the relationships among language, text, meaning and reality (Lawson and Appignanesi, 1989). Postmodernists regard language as a cultural artefact with political or economic reality for the individual in the culture. Language is the key creator of the social world people experience. Not a tool for describing an objective reality (Mickey, 1997).

Rosenau (1992) explained that postmodernism offers arguments that are extremely contras to the positivism orientation. It proposes indeterminacy, diversity, difference and complexity. Thus it rejects determinism, unity, synthesis, and simplicity. Moreover, this tradition looks at the unique rather than the generalisation, and deterministic causality. Postmodernists stress that social science become more subjective and humble enterprise as truth is tentative. They reject application the model of natural science enquiry in the social science. They also do not test theory since testing will require evidence, which is perceived as a meaningless concept (Rosenau, 1992). Thus, it is clear that this tradition has challenged the positivism tradition. However, their argument implies that they are pessimistic about truth and they have uncertainty of human understanding on social world. They may not convince all social scientists although the tradition offers unique views on social science enquiry and rejects ultimate and static truth.

The importance of truth is attacked. In contrast to positivism, truth is no longer the aim of any social enquiry; in other words, truth is not the most important notion to arrive at. Thus, post-modernism rejects positivism’s claim on absolute truth. Nietzsche has described truth as merely our illusion. Truths are illusions which one has forgotten are illusions, worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the sense, coins which have their obverse effaced and are now no longer of account as coins but merely a metal (cf. Potter, 2000, p: 151).

Nietzsche argued that truth is not postmodernists’ interest and it becomes a constraint to achieve power, which seems to be an important notion to postmodernism. Postmodernism’s core philosophy lies on its attempt to attack objective truth (Nietzsche). From postmodernism perspective, meaning is undecidable and therefore truth is unattainable. Truth is perceived as a misleading goal as it can distract us from our enquiry. Therefore, postmodernism can be labeled as a radical version of relativism (Lawson and Appignanesi, 1989). This tradition pushes relativism and constructivism to their logical conclusion and deconstructs criteriality. Reality is only individual construct and individual will act dependent on an idiosyncratic understanding of our world (Mabry, 2002). Hence, reality is perceived as the result of subjective individual constructions, and reality may not be shaped by common constructions. Indeed we will find deconstruction and there is no universal truth but truth lies on individual judgment on his or her own constructions. Regarding the notion of truth, whether in terms of rationality grounded consensus or of correspondence to an independent reality, is no longer considered to be a worthwhile goal for management research or a possible moral basis for managerial practice and authority (Johnson and Duberley, 2006).

Potter (2000) says that postmodernism seems to equalise two opposite notions: true and false. We cannot conclude whether a statement is true or false. Furthermore, this orientation does not concern on truth claim, indeed it argues that there is no truth and we can never arrive at truth. Thus, it proposes nihilism that sees truth as incapable of validation except through personal preference and individual values systems. For postmodernist, society is an irrelevant concept and good or bad is a matter of individual definition: the individual will pursue his/her own to the best of his/her ability (Jackson and Carter, 1995). In addition, for postmodernists, science implies diversity and situationality, individual values and commitments, complexity and contextuality (Jackson and Carter, 1995). It seems that under
postmodernism, scientists will disagree among themselves, and thus dissensus emerges, then common agreement will never be attained.

Accordingly, Hassan (1987) gives his critised towards postmodernism and positivism. He argues that ultimate truth is unpopular anymore in social science. However, the need for theory is still crucial. Social world without theory means an absolute equality of all discourse. Then, the entire intellectual climate of social sciences would be transformed. Truth would be replaced by new forms of postmodernism: clarity, this is irony in relation to our own disbelief, recognition of our individual “will to power”, discovery of “strength through moderation” and ultimately a “translation of all values” (cf.: Rosenau, 1992). Further, Mabry (2002) says scientists are expected to deliver unbiased truth about reality, while postmodernists insist there is no truth. She argues that truth is not a matter of majority rule, but developing findings in dissensus is difficult. We cannot decide what is valid when disagreement is entrenched.

For postmodernist, the aim of enquiry is the harmony between researchers and their social world (Potter, 2000). However, how can we convince people that our statement is true or false? Let us take a simple statement as an example. “I am not a manager” am I right or wrong? The answer is neither right nor wrong and the statement is neither true nor false. Hence, people will never know whether a statement is right or wrong if all statement are equally true or may be equally wrong. Similarly, whatever we found from our research cannot be seen as truth or untruth by other people.

Correspondence theory of truth stresses that truth can be found if researchers passively observe reality or facts. Something is seen as truth if it matches with facts. And the finding can be viewed as universal, static and final. This implies that scientific truth as a destination and not a part of a journey. As Willower and Uline (2001) has claimed that there are no final or universal truths in science. Therefore, it may argue that correspondence theory of truth has a serious problem with the universal truth claim. In contrast, postmodernists seem to reject truth in scientific inquiry rejecting correspondence and consensus theory of truth. This implies that there is no scientific truth as a goal, because for postmodernists, it is just shaped by illusion. However, Mabry (2002) has stated that it looks almost impossible to work without a goal and developing finding in dissensus is difficult since validity can not be assured.

2.3 Critical Theory and Consensus Theory of Truth

Critical theorists, like postmodernists, reject the unity of method principle for natural science and social science, deterministic causal relations in social world and objectivity of positivism. However, critical theory has different argument from postmodernism especially on truth claim. Critical theory is apart from both absolute or universal truth and no truth theory, rather, this orientation offers consensus theory of truth, which requires an ideal speech situation (Wilson, 1997). Critical theory has been developed by Jurgen Habermas; thus, his views will be the main topic of the discussion. He develops critical theory continuing the work of the Frankfurt School in Germany. He classified three categories of sciences. First, the empirical-analytic sciences are interested in technically exploitable knowledge, in prediction and control, and thus with increasing the possibility of human donation over nature and social relations and human social existence is based on work. Second, the historical-hermeneutic sciences and is based on practical interests in the communicative understanding between individuals and within and between social groups. Third, critical theory, its evolving self-reflection and is based on an emancipatory interest in achieving rational autonomy. Critical theory tradition involves all three forms (Blakie, 1993).

In contrast to positivists, critical theorists posit that first, there is a difference between observing nature and observing people. Second, inquiry into social activity should focus on understanding their meanings from within the social context and lifeworld of actors (Ngwennyana, 1997). This means that research on management practice requires interpretation of managers or actors' activities from their perspective. Jurgen Habermas has been seeking to formulate a critical theory of society, which is both practical and emancipatory. He adopts hermeneutics and interpretivis orientation who claim that the subjects
matter of the natural and social science are basically different (Wright, 1994). Habermas also describes the natural science as using 'sense of experience' based on direct observation and the social and cultural or hermeneutic sciences as using 'communicative experience' based on the understanding of meaning derived from communication with the social actors (Blaike, 1993). Hence, we need a dialogic process of understanding social world. This process allows everyone to communicate his/her experience within a shared framework of cultural meaning (Blaike, 1993). Critical theory suggests that the appropriate standards for evaluating a truth claim, and communicative action, is the force of the better argument (Wright, 1994). Further, what constitutes the truth is ultimately a group consensus. It is not an immutable truth, however, everyone can and will change as the membership in the community changes and acquires additional knowledge. Truth emerges through discourse, which is free and unconstrained and not distorted by power or money. Therefore, ideal speech situation provides a standard for understanding how the truth claim is distorted (Wright, 1994). White (1988) summarised the following rules as constitutive of an ideal speech situation;

1. Each subject is allowed to participate in discussion;
2a. Each is allowed to call into question any proposal
2b. Each is allowed to introduce any proposal into the discussion
2c. Each is allowed to expresses his attitudes, wishes, and needs
3. No speaker ought to be hindered by compulsion – whether arising from inside the discussion or outside it – from making use of the rights secure under 1) and 2) (cf. Wilson, 1997; p: 192)

In such situation every participant of discussion must have the goal of an ultimate consensus that terminates in intersubjective understanding, shared knowledge and mutual trust among participants. A consensus is attainable through the force of better argument with no constraint on discussion and free from a framework of domination and thus the consensus requires open debate (Wilson, 1997). Therefore, truth can only be attained through critical discussion, through the achievement of a “rational consensus”, not through as appeal to evidence gained by observation. A consensus can be regarded as perfectly rational when it demonstrates rational and competent person would come to the same conclusion if they were free of all constraints or distorting influences (Blaike, 1993).

Similarly, Johnson and Duberly (2000) described the key issue in critical theory is the need for researchers and the researched to be reflexively aware of their own presuppositions and values, which achieved in open and undistorted communication. For critical theories, the hope of achieving some notion of truth is maintained – to be achieved through consensus and/or praxis (Johnson and Duberly, 2006)

Jurgen Habermas has proposed a consensus theory of truth, which stresses truth claims can ultimately be decided only through critical discussion, through the achievement of a ‘rational consensus’, not by an appeal to evidence gained by observation (Blaike, 1993). It seems that a consensus obtained should be based on our perfect rationality and we can arrive at the same truth if we are free from all constraints or distorting influences in communication process. This ideal speech situation is a necessary requirement for consensus. Therefore, truth claim involves the promise of reaching a consensus and truth is not based on the evidence gained from objective observation but on consensus that could be expected in an ideal speech situation (Blaike, 1993). It is clear that the ideal speech situation offers everyone to have equal opportunity to access and share information. In other words, everyone is equal in the undistorted communication process. Further, the essence of the process is to be understood, to persuade by reason and information and be persuaded by reason and information. This shows that people really do want to understand each other. However, relation of power can distort the process and thus ideal speech situation is difficult to achieve (Potter, 2000). Other critics toward the consensus theory of truth have been given by Blaike (1993, p: 114)
A major difficulty with this theory is that its own justification is based on the same process, thus leading to an infinite regress. However, depending on one's point of view, this can be viewed as either a reasonable method for dealing with the insoluble problem of the relativity of all knowledge, or an inadequate attempt to overcome the problem of relativism.

The problem is we all can be wrong about our reality or we are not absolutely right about our reality although we have agreed upon it. Thus we actually do not find the truth, and we may not be aware that we all are wrong and do not find the truth (Potter, 2000). Further, in consensus theory, truth is socially determined from ideal speech situation. However, this indicates that we would see truth emerging through discussion all time and it is only ideological distortion arising from asymmetrical power relations, which prevent this (Potter, 2000).

Critical theory implies that the role of researcher is to present the findings to the public, and the public must decide if they agree on the result of analysis. This theory suggests that truth is attainable and necessary goal in scientific enquiry through ideal speech situation. Nevertheless, the truth is not static and open debates are proposed to gain consensus. The concept of the ideal speech situation suggests that scientists engaged in communicative action raise four validity claims: comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness, and presupposes that each claim may be justified if challenged (Wright, 1994). Critical theory is an interesting approach to research in management areas since this orientation provides a framework through which it is possible to examine the political nature of management and organisation and it also provides a basis for critic the processes and the institutions (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

3. Conclusion

The positivism tradition shows that science must be rationally acquired through objective observation and statistical analysis is an important aspect to measure what is being observed. Further, what is being observed is assumed to have regularity. This assumption is applied not only in natural sciences but also in social sciences. Thus, the regularity allows us to predict human behaviour by utilising statistical tools, which may require a reduction on factors analysed in a very complex phenomena. This also implies that human assumed to behave rationally and thus there is a deterministic relation between human behaviour with influence factors. The tradition holds correspondence theory of truth which explains that researchers can arrive at truth if they objectively observe the social reality. This means that truth is independent upon neutrality observing social world and scientific truth is universal, absolute and fix.

In contrast to the positivism tradition, postmodernists argue that social science is subjective and truth is tentative and thus rejects ultimate and static truth. This tradition eschews truth claim, indeed it argues that there is no truth and that truth is not the aim of social inquiry and thus the tradition proposes nihilism. On the other hand, critical theory proposes consensus theory of truth, which explains that truth can be attained whenever ideal speech situation is created. In contrast to positivism, truth is not based on the evidence gained from objective observation but on consensus emerges in ideal speech situation and thus truth is attainable but not absolute, universal or static but open debates is important to gain consensus. This tradition also holds subjective view of social world and inter-subjective understanding, shared knowledge and understanding are required to arrive at truth.

Based on the discussion above, it seems that following postmodernism, management researchers will have serious problems as they are uncertain on human understanding on management practice/issues. Positivism, meanwhile, requires objective observation and rejects subjectivism in studying human activities/management practices. Critical theory is in "between" those philosophical commitments; however it is not the reason to follow it. The tradition admits subjective view on studying human activities or management phenomena.
References


