

SG•Global

New labour journal seeks to marry theory and practice

It is part of the labour movement's efforts to translate research into strategies to help workers earn a better living



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The International Labour Organisation has them, as do some research institutions. Labour journals aren't new, but the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) is putting a new spin on them.

The first edition of the Singapore Labour Journal, launched at the Labour Research Conference organised by NTUC last Friday, seeks to marry theory and practice.

Titled "Reflect, Reimagine, Restrategise", it draws from the work of researchers, trade union leaders and practitioners, and aims to provide a platform for local and international academics and policymakers to share their knowledge with the wider community.

I managed to get hold of a hard copy. It's slim but weighty (both literally and figuratively), and kicks off with research articles on three topics: reinventing trade unions for the digital age, continuing education and training, and retirement attitudes.



Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong (front row, sixth from left) with union leaders and representatives from the labour movement at the launch of the Forward Singapore exercise in June. Last Friday, the NTUC launched its inaugural labour journal. It draws from the work of researchers, trade union leaders and practitioners, and aims to provide a platform for local and international academics and policymakers to share their knowledge with the wider community. ST FILE PHOTO

This is followed by a report on the future needs of young workers, and how the trade union membership model can evolve to stay relevant to them.

The report doesn't mince its words. The five researchers and industry practitioners who jointly penned the piece describe the Singapore labour movement's reputation among youth as a form of "insurance" – in other words, something which one approaches only in times of need.

They make several recommendations to better establish the labour movement in youths' minds as a useful source of resources and services – including more online outreach, and

sustained career support and mentoring beyond schools.

The journal, which is intended to be a yearly affair, concludes with practitioners' insight pieces on NTUC's role in five areas:

- Shaping Singapore's evolving work compact
- Engaging and organising workers through digital means
- Supporting worker and company transformation
- Doing more to help professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) overcome disruption and discrimination
- Supporting youth to realise their aspirations.

Reproduced in Monday's edition of *The Straits Times* is the piece on PMEs written by NTUC assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay.

I understand that there's been a crush of offers to contribute articles to subsequent editions of the journal. It's always a good thing to have more labour research which is grounded in relevant local practice.

But I would like to see top-of-mind topics such as the Progressive Wage Model, and support for platform workers – covering areas such as retirement and housing adequacy, work injury compensation and bargaining power – make their appearance in subsequent editions. More sharing

of best practices from around the region and the world would also be useful.

Here's hoping that the new publication will have legs.

Hard copies of the Singapore Labour Journal will be made available to unions in Singapore, government agencies, trade associations, chambers and foundations, as well as the relevant regional and international trade union organisations.

It will also be available at all public libraries here. Digital copies can be found online and on the National Library Board website PublicationSG.

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