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### Introducing business school research and positive impact

Howard THOMAS

Singapore Management University, [howardthomas@smu.edu.sg](mailto:howardthomas@smu.edu.sg)

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# Introducing Business School Research and Positive Impact

HOWARD THOMAS

Introduction

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The first, inaugural EFMD annual research volume, 'Perspectives on the impact, mission and purpose of the business school', was launched as a special issue of Global Focus magazine in November 2022 and was subsequently published in book form in 2023 by Routledge (Cornuel *et al.*, 2023). It examined how impact has become an increasingly important theme in addressing the purpose and value of the modern business/management school. Typically debates about impact have involved such issues as the 'rigour/relevance debate' (Irwin, 2023) and the co-production of research knowledge through business school collaboration with agencies of business, government and civil society. Partly because of the influence of media rankings and a discernible 'market managerialism' orientation in business schools' leadership (Locke and Spender, 2011), business school impact performance has been measured primarily in terms of 'league table' outputs (e.g. citation counts and media rankings) rather than through assessment of meaningful outcomes relative to societal and economic impact (which cannot be measured quite as succinctly and neatly as performance metrics and media rankings). Indeed, Eric Cornuel (2023) in his role as EFMD President, re-emphasised the adoption of the principle of 'stakeholder' rather than shareholder value maximisation in order to advance research ideas that benefit society as well as fulfilling the clear scientific mission of academia. He reinforced responsible impact goals by stressing the importance of business and management schools producing positive impacts through clear academic research findings which can then be interpreted, understood and implemented by applied practitioners.

Therefore, in rereading the perspectives in the EFMD Research Volume 1 (Cornuel *et al.*, 2023), you will notice comments amongst its authors about the need to address more closely issues of the societal and economic impact of

business school research. Suggestions for topics included corporate social responsibility, sustainability, the ESG (economic, social and governance) agenda and collaboration both between business schools as well as with business and governments. External environments in a precarious world were seen as equally challenging with political issues of concern such as inequality, populism, decoupling and de-globalisation becoming more critical. Further, building entrepreneurship programmes and developing ecosystems between schools and their stakeholders has become a strategic imperative. There was also a sense that future research should be even more interdisciplinary and integrative.

Hence, the broad theme of this second stand-alone annual EFMD 'research' volume will be to debate business schools' increasing focus on, and search for, meaningful societal and economic research impact involving, in particular, co-operation and collaboration in both knowledge creation and implementation of the findings of academic research in practice. Examples of this societally-oriented applied research can already be found in publications of EFMD, which have reported the results of their annual 'Excellence in Practice' (EiP) prize-winning awards in Global Focus special issues over the last decade, (also see the Ginneberge paper on the evolution of EiP in this volume) as well as more recently GBSN (the Global Business School Network) with its 'Going Beyond' awards. Further, the RRBM (Responsible Research in Business and Management) community examined, in the paper 'Which business topics should we research?' (Tsui *et al.*, 2023), award-winning RRBM articles and books and outlined their impacts. The Financial Times in its recent sustainability series provided summaries of impactful research in the field. AACSB International have also produced a recent white paper on business schools and societal impact.

Consequently, there has been much more interest in the broad spectrum of academic research activities and the issue of assessing research outputs using more qualitative performance assessment(s). In particular, the trade-offs between the *value* and the costs of teaching/learning efforts and academic research are being scrutinised carefully and cost/benefit analysis of the impact of research and its influence on societal and economic performance is now more closely evaluated. During this evaluation, interested parties have been asking a fundamental question, namely, how can we measure the outputs, and hence impact, of academic research in business and management schools more meaningfully? And how can schools build up research capabilities both in academia and, particularly, in collaborating more effectively with the tri-sectors of business, government and civil society? This, in turn suggests at least two key questions about appropriate research performance metrics, namely, first, “what are other ways of measuring meaningful and rigorous research besides high impact publications and citation scores?” Second, “how can measures of success and collaborative impact between business schools and the ‘tri-sectors’ of business, government and industry be devised?” Hence, it is now essential for business school leaders to examine how business schools should shift from simply counting research citations to assessing impacts in a more comprehensive fashion. How can business schools communicate their impact clearly to all their stakeholders and demonstrate their ability to catalyse strategic development and social change?

### MEASURING BUSINESS SCHOOL IMPACT

Typically, there are three main priorities, and dimensions, which interact with each other as business schools frame their visions and missions of enhancing management knowledge and producing distinctive management theories and insights (Thomas *et al.*, 2023). First, the processes of knowledge generation and development to produce high quality, often multi-disciplinary research outputs involving academic faculty, doctoral students and ‘tri-sector’ participants. Second, knowledge dissemination in teaching and learning activities enabling the growth of quality education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and thus contributing to student intellectual growth and societal socio-economic development and advancement. Third, knowledge transfer through ‘tri-sector’ collaboration, engagement and practice enhancements, i.e. translating academic knowledge into meaningful impacts for potential implementation by key stakeholders. The key strategic question is how does a business school know it has achieved its vision and mission goals in terms of the three

main targets and objectives of academic excellence, student learning success and meaningful, positive socio-economic impact? We examine each element in turn.

### MEASURING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Internationally the standard quantitative output measure for research merit and excellence is the number, and citations, of so-called high impact publications in leading A-star journals (often measured by Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate and other bibliometrics). These measures are widely critiqued by many academics, who are against the use of journal impact factors as a measure of research quality (arguing that such A-star papers are not read much by other academics and even less by practicing managers). A specific academic criticism is that a citation is a measure of impactful publication at a single point in time (usually at the end of a project) but often fails to capture the scholarly academic impact that becomes evident over time. For that reason, as a scholar’s work evolves, and becomes increasingly recognised as influential and significant, it is argued that measurement of impact should at least focus on the creation of field, or discipline, weighted citation measures which capture both longer-term intellectual influence and impact rather than immediate publication or citation impact (other bibliometric agencies e.g. Altmetrics, also offer a more long-term view of citation metrics). Further, from a policy perspective, measurement of scholarly impact should also track a scholar’s impact in terms of such important factors as the number, and scale, of research grants received and outstanding Ph.D. students mentored and produced, as well as the receipt by such first-rate scholars of lifetime achievement or leadership awards from the leading professional or learned societies in their fields.

### MEASURING TEACHING AND LEARNING SUCCESS

Excellent faculty who teach very well and typically produce more applied forms of research involving practicing managers and organisations, are rarely as highly valued as distinguished academic scholars. They are variously described as adjunct, clinical, or practice faculty yet they are extremely important in developing new pedagogical approaches, in writing insightful case studies and in encouraging linkages between students and companies, entrepreneurial start-ups and public sector organisations. They tutor and lead students in action and experiential learning projects and provide expertise as they train them to organise and manage applied projects in teams. They also prepare students for oral presentations in external case study competitions as well as mentoring them while undertaking internships with companies and learning from innovative entrepreneurs. In essence, they provide a bridge

between the classroom and practice and generate a range of important insights and experiences for both students and more research-oriented faculty. It is clear that their contributions should be measured more broadly via teaching awards (investigating why and how they inspire students) and their development, and creation of award-winning case studies and simulation models which illustrate the implementation of management tools, theories and planning approaches. Many of these faculty also produce excellent text books which prepare the students to be highly effective in their careers. Student feedback about courses is often sought retrospectively from alumni who frequently mention particular courses and teachers who strongly influenced the development of their own careers. Such feedback is a strong reminder for schools to measure the value and performance of excellent teachers and mentors, judging how they improve the educational quality of curricula and inspire students to build lifelong skills and capabilities (in fairness, it should also be pointed out that some outstanding scholars are also great teachers – a ‘win-win’ outcome - but it is often the value of the ‘rump’ of excellent applied faculty that must also be measured and assessed even more carefully).

#### **MEASURING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND ENGAGEMENT**

While acknowledging the need to measure the scholarly and pedagogical value and performance of academic faculty, governments across the world have become increasingly interested in the cost-benefit trade-offs between the value and costs of investments in academic research and teaching, and the extent and importance of academic influence on society and economic growth pathways. Indeed, there have been an increasing number of studies focusing on the value of academic research relative to socio-economic impact (e.g. governments in France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Australia, the US and the UK). These studies have adopted similar frameworks for evaluating research impact. The main aim is to complement a continued strong focus on rigorous, relevant high-quality research with more detailed assessment of its meaningful socio-economic impact to all stakeholders in society.

Hence, all countries tend to favour a more balanced assessment of outputs, often with bibliometric measures, in order to judge research quality in terms of rigour, originality, significance, and reach. Some, such as the USA, continue to rely, and focus, mainly on citations and publication metrics and advocate the construction of, for example, 4-year H-index measures to address longer-term value. Further, they stress that publications for assessment should normally be located in the top academic field journals which offer relatively few qualitative statements about the potential

value of such research to societal objectives. Other countries notably Australia and the UK, have constructed more comprehensive research evaluation frameworks which also include similar quantitative output measures to those used in the USA but add much stronger qualitative assessment dimension methods which involve expert assessment of the reach and significance, of research studies, and which seek to explain the impacts, societal and economic, of these research studies and institutes over a longer time horizon. These expert assessors also evaluate the research institutes in relation to such important factors as their innovativeness, vitality and sustainability. Typically, in such cases as Australia and the UK, around 30% of the overall research assessment framework evaluation analyses the socio-economic impact, research environment and culture of the research institution.

More generally, these frameworks have provided important information and insights about how researchers have attempted to stimulate and grow the spectrum of research activity from their research units and universities. They point out how efforts to improve quality, to develop emerging areas of research, to promote integration between disciplines (e.g. healthcare and digitisation methodologies) and to incentivise interdisciplinary research have been nurtured. In addition, it is clear that governments have encouraged the development of ecosystems for collaborative research whether cross-disciplinary within a given institution or across different educational institutions and research institutes as well as collaborations with industry and government in order to improve co-production of knowledge and opportunities for applied research. In turn, such collaborative research often leads to effective strategic implementation of new ideas and innovations in communities, business and governmental contexts.

(Note: for those interested in examining the conduct and findings of recent research excellence frameworks (REF) in the UK, see Pidd and Broadbent (2015), Hughes, Webber and O'Regan (2019) for REF 2014 and for REF 2021 see REF impact case study database, UKRI, 2022: (<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>) as well as a recent article by Blackburn *et al.* (2023).

#### **OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETAL IMPACT**

Many recent papers have attempted to define and identify approaches for measuring the societal impact of research (e.g. Haley and Jack (2023); Kalika (2023)). Kalika's (2022) book is also particularly useful as it catalogues a decade of impact resulting from the evolution of BSIS (the Business School Impact System) (a partnership between EFMD and FNEGE (the French Foundation for Management Education)). BSIS was the first framework to propose a

global view of positive business school impact based upon seven school impact influence dimensions, namely, financial, educational, business development, intellectual, ecosystem, societal and image impact. BSIS has been used by over 60 schools globally to understand, and communicate their real impact to their stakeholders. Some of the challenges of measuring societal impact (based upon Kalika (2022) and suggestions in an AOM survey by Haley and Jack (2023, pp.20-23)) are indicated below:

### Challenges

- “Most of the scholars stated that the present system for faculty evaluation led to over reliance on more traditional techniques and methodologies and what journal editors find acceptable”
- Further “most faculty in business schools tend to conduct rigorous research that speaks to just a few people as such research advances their careers”
- Will universities and professional organisations such as EFMD and AACSB measure scholarly impact more closely aligned with their own academic visions/missions? For example, will universities adjust their academic evaluation and promotion criteria to incorporate all their strategic priorities – research, teaching and learning, and stakeholder engagement?
- Will journal editors demand impact statements as an integral part of articles about specific research studies?
- Will the spread of US standards (e.g. citation metrics, H-indices, etc.) globally amount to imperialism with disregard of context, culture and country characteristics?

Despite the challenges most current business school academics would, however, agree with researchers such as Renate E Meyer (from WU, Vienna), (Haley and Jack, 2023, p.5) who stresses that “scientifically rigorous research is and has to remain academia’s core currency”. She adds that “societal impact refers to the lasting efforts that our research has on the attainment of societal goals such as equality, sustainability, or less poverty ... impact is not equal to sitting on advisory boards, counselling politicians, or being present in the media.”

Meyer also points out a real concern, that societal impact, especially in the social sciences, is hard to pin down. “It unfolds in a non-linear way and causality can hardly ever be attributed to a specific publication ... to summarise, when assessing societal impact, we are faced with a non-linearity, a temporality, and a visibility (or better: vanity) challenge.”

Nevertheless, despite the elusiveness of the concept of

societal impact Haley and Jack (2023, p.22) advocate modifications of short-term metrics in order to acquire more complete data and measure a wider range of scholarly impact. Their suggestions include some of the following:

- Standardised, broadly adopted, open-access classification systems for journal articles and books/reports
- Refinements of citations data (e.g. self-citations; positive/negative citations; H-indices; field-weighted indices)
- Greater emphasis on contributions to some of the more significant applied journals, (e.g. HBR (Harvard Business Review), SMR (Sloan Management Review), CMR (California Management Review) and LRP (Long-Range Planning))
- Co-production of knowledge/research with practitioners to ensure practical relevance and reach of the findings
- Recognition of the value of inter-disciplinary research within and across institutions

We may not agree with any or all of these metrics but interdisciplinary research may yet prove to be more impactful than research which draws on just one discipline.

Indeed, to quote Arnoud de Meyer (2011), former president of Singapore Management University (SMU) “the business world exists as an ecosystem of business, government, NGOs and non-profits, each interlocking with the other. This is also why research has to be interdisciplinary, to consider the impact across different stakeholders.”

Interdisciplinarity as a concept should, or could, also be nurtured by transnational alliances of ‘like-minded’ universities, which have a strong orientation in the social and management sciences (as an example perhaps schools like Copenhagen Business School, LSE, Paris Dauphine and WU Vienna). Such alliances might involve open collaboration across a range of activities, leading to enhanced networks and a research ecosystem which could collectively achieve greater impact, recognition and influence. And other researchers such as Tima Bansal and her colleagues at the interdisciplinary ‘Innovation North lab’ at Ivey Business School in Canada are working together to provide frameworks to address so-called ‘wicked problems’ or societal grand challenges. Bansal says her lab “does not seek to solve specific wicked problems, but to develop the tools and protocols, so that innovators can tackle the wicked problems they choose.”

## **PERSPECTIVES ON MEANINGFUL, POSITIVE RESEARCH IMPACT FROM PAPERS AND AUTHORS IN THIS VOLUME**

Authors in this volume have been carefully selected from a range of distinctive global business schools and research institutes to present their perspectives on meaningful research impact. Writers such as Haley and Jack (2023), Kalika (2022) and Tsui (2023) have pointed out how business school research has changed, and expanded, over the last decade. There has clearly been an increasing commitment to responsible management research and an emphasis on identifying meaningful research impacts for all stakeholders particularly in relation to achieving socio-economic impact goals. While the pursuit of high-quality, rigorous research impact is still a dominant core academic value, efforts to attack more complex issues such as so-called grand challenges (e.g. climate change, sustainability, etc.) have required cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration between business schools and their core stakeholders in business, government and civil society. Such efforts have generated greater understanding of how research insights, ideas and approaches can be translated effectively to solve practical management problems in business, government and society.

After the introduction to this volume, important papers on EFMD and Societal Impact (by Eric Cornuel and Howard Thomas, and Jan Ginneberge) succinctly review EFMD's perspectives on practice and societal impact.

Indeed, Cornuel and Thomas point out that "EFMD has constantly focused on linking European educational experience and innovative ideas with meaningful impact on management practice and learning." They argue that "European management education has thus developed a clear identity and a balanced relationship with government and society" which leads to a strong "belief in socially responsible management education that is endemic" and is "deeply embedded in its EQUIS accreditation peer review standards for the last ten years."

With this philosophy of responsible, impactful management education as a key principle they state that "we believe that the dominant research model in business schools must evolve quickly. We must augment the 'great divide' between academic excellence in research and its practical application" they suggest that "we need faculty members to be engaged in and, most importantly, be rewarded for path-breaking multidisciplinary research, applied collaborative research projects as well as innovation in teaching, engagement in society and communities." Simply put, it must provide rigorous, responsible and impactful research which is relevant for all stakeholders.

Ginneberge's paper examines the business school practice linkages through EFMD's experiences with its Excellence in Practice awards. What is unique about Jan's paper is that it chronicles the evolution of EFMD's Excellence in Practice (EiP) awards and identifies the changing character of the outstanding award projects over the 15-year journey of meaningful, positive impact growth for practitioner and other stakeholder audiences. The paper suggests that there have been at least three distinct phases in the journey towards practical impact, namely: the period from 2007-2013 when the era of customised executive education in business schools, occasionally in partnership with business consultants, led to award-winning projects in such areas as organisational development and change, human capital, strategic leadership and strategy implementation processes; on the other hand, outstanding projects in the 2013-2019 period where business schools focused on building stronger linkages with both their business and governmental audiences. For example, interest in socially responsible management education grew and this encompassed collaborative joint projects and ecosystem developments in areas such as the ESG agenda and sustainability; finally, the 2019-2023/4 period saw an intensification in the number and quality of outstanding collaborative projects in both public and business policy applications. In particular, some joint projects tackled so-called 'grand challenges' in areas such as UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and issues of inequality and social and financial inclusion.

Ginneberge's concluding observations are well-formed. He points particularly to the advent of "complex partnerships and associated design heterogeneity" and the "growth of a high-touch technology-enabled and enhanced development journey". More 'wicked' complex development problems will be the currency of future development projects in practice.

Following this review, we present twelve papers from well-known authors and schools which we have categorised into three clusters, namely, business schools as purposive organisations; building research ecosystems harnessing the power of partnerships and multi-disciplinary frameworks; and tackling complex problems of societal impact.

In the first cluster, business schools leverage their skills and capabilities to address important managerial issues such as organisational purpose, leadership and organisational development and change. These may occur through executive education activities and requests for joint corporate and business school action learning and management projects. In the second cluster, business schools are attempting to build research ecosystems harnessing the power of partnerships between business schools as well as with business, government departments,



etc., to generate collective know-how, joint research activities and co-produce impactful insights and outcomes. In the third cluster, more complex ('wicked') socio-economic problems are examined which require tri-sector collaboration (i.e. business, government and civil society) to develop longer-term ecosystems to achieve meaningful long-run societal impact.

## CLUSTER 1

### Concepts of the purposeful business school

Roy Suddaby's paper on 'management education with purpose' argues that management is a 'syncretic profession, "... our research must balance both descriptions of the way the world is, and aspirational visions of the way the world ought to be. Yes, our research must be rigorously scientific, however it must also rest on aspirational values and virtues that define what we study ...". Using research examples, drawn from the Gustavson School of Business in Victoria, Canada, which contains a single department of different management disciplines, he examines how values inform the conduct of research that prioritises human, social and environmental factors. The Gustavson School's sense of purpose and research mission drives research and involves four aspirational value commitments, namely: commitments to regenerative sustainability, basic applied *community-based research*, redefining impact and generating wisdom in addition to scientific knowledge. He concludes by stating "more authority arises when technical experts go beyond the way the world is, and begin to use their expertise to articulate a better world."

Johan Roos, the Chief Academic Officer, of Hult International Business School, a private school with a global footprint, argues that it has a different identity in the academic business school landscape. It has a strong practical focus, a commitment to learning and teaching excellence and a distinctive, academic and business culture. Its approach to research and impact focuses on three objectives – to increase output quality, grow institutional reputation and make a difference in society. With its more applied academic orientation it has created an intellectual learning environment with modern infrastructure and a committed, thought leadership-focused, applied faculty. The research is generated by its research structure involving three 'Impact Hubs' – Futures, Sustainability and People – where faculty become involved in community research e.g. Hult's partnership Sustainability Lab with Unilever and its efforts on diabetic care with Novo Nordisk, Diabetes UK and the NHS demonstrate applied meaningful research partnerships. Its development of Lego/Serious Play

demonstrates how its innovative pedagogical research tools have strongly influenced leadership, organisational development and change programmes and initiatives for its stakeholder partners.

Roos concludes with a series of insights from Hult's approach. Notably, "at the core is a commitment to serving the interests of societal stakeholders" and "its interdisciplinary and inclusive research perspective" and commitment to writing an extensive number of applied case studies demonstrates clear involvement and engagement with societal problems albeit with a somewhat more applied and pragmatic style.

The paper by Anand Narasimhan, IMD's Research Dean, complements Manzoni's (2023) IMD paper. It explains how a clear research strategy has emerged, and grown successfully in a very applied private business school which has a crystal clear 'Real Learning, Real Impact' vision.

Its research impact strategy is closely linked to its practical orientation. Its strategy follows a 'From Practice to Research' perspective. This means that IMD faculty and researchers focus on identifying and solving those practical problems that have long-term relevance and value for its clients and stakeholders. In attempting to solve those highly relevant problems, and issues, researchers apply rigorous, research approaches and hence follow a solution pathway which can be described as 'From Relevance, To Rigour' – reversing the rigour to relevance pattern familiar in academic research.

The paper gives examples of IMD's research agenda and portfolio, which includes topics ranging from 'World Competitiveness' to 'Family Business' as well as Business Transformation (including organisational change, people and planet issues and sustainability). This research output is sometimes reported in top academic journals but more frequently in the top, highly-rated practitioner journals, namely Harvard Business Review and MIT's Sloan Management Review (recognised in the FT top research journal list) and as award-winning projects in EFMD's Excellence in Practice (EiP) awards.

IMD's philosophy of research impact can be detected in answers to the following questions: "What if the realm of practice were to ignite fresh research dialogues?" And, if after the subsequent conversations "put purpose at the core of your strategy", then "practitioner articles [and books] can influence the trajectory of academic research."

In conclusion, the paper notes that it "values both business and applied research. The faculty values plurality (and promotes) multidisciplinary collaboration in our thought leadership activities and are conscientious about acknowledging and rewarding our impact on them."

Jon Foster-Pedley, Dean of Henley Africa Business School, discusses how to carve out identity, meaning and purpose for African management education. He carefully addresses how African schools should design management education models that “recognise the potential impact they could have across the entire ecosystem of society .... It is also necessary [for them] to play a more active role in identifying African-facing problems and engaging with all stakeholders to achieve impactful solutions.”

He also discusses a number of collaborative research initiatives involving Henley and other African schools. For example, the award-winning research and teaching partnership with GIBS (the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria) on ‘African authentic leadership’ in Standard Bank, Africa. And, the pathbreaking teaching project using virtual reality (VR) and immersive learning collaborative partnerships to upskill managers at scale across Africa so that they can be exposed to both continent-wide networks and a wide range of alternative business challenges and potential solutions.

He concludes with the hope that continuing tie-ups with both African and foreign schools will enable research on such pressing issues as the strong development of entrepreneurial start-ups in Africa as well as joint programmes on improving exports and foreign trade, which should in turn, lead to very positive economic and societal impacts for the African continent.

## CLUSTER 2

### **Development of Research Ecosystems, Partnerships and Collective Know-How**

Soumitra Dutta, Dean at Saïd Business School, Oxford University, carefully outlines the elements of the school’s responsible research strategy. He stresses that “responsible research is not only research that investigates social enterprises or issues of sustainability and development. Scholars focusing on all areas of business activity both can and should engage in research that leads to positive impacts for business and thus for society in general.” Further, recognising that management and business is essentially an applied discipline, he emphasises that Saïd’s research mission is “to produce research of the highest quality that is rigorous, imaginative and meaningfully relevant to, and enhances, business practice,” and leverages the strength of all Oxford’s colleges and disciplines.

Professor Andrew Stephen, Saïd’s Research Dean also reinforces Dutta’s proposition of rigorous, high-quality responsible research indicating applications that address large scale problems which “are boundary spanning and future focused”, collaborative in research links with both

practitioners and scholars in other disciplines (often in Oxford University) and closely linked with the objectives of all teaching and learning programmes at Saïd, including executive education. Examples such as the ‘Future of Marketing Initiative’, the ‘Scenarios Planning Methodology’ and the Skoll Entrepreneurship Centre’s work illustrate the range, impact and importance of investigating significant societal problems. Indeed, Saïd’s conscious effort to develop ecosystems to drive collaboration and wide collective know-how is clearly evident in the work of the Skoll Centre which brings together partners and co-researchers not just from the University of Oxford but also from countries and business schools/research institutes across the world.

Professor Katy Mason, Associate Dean for Research at Lancaster Management School (LUMS), in developing LUMS research strategy was also influenced by the ‘responsible management agenda’ and recognised that this represented “a real opportunity for business and management schools – not known for their innovative approach to business and management to shift towards something different, bold and significant” Katy wanted to build a responsible management research centre embracing the needs of the environment, the university, LUMS and individual faculty researchers. Through interactions with all constituencies, she anchored the development of a new research strategy involving a clear vision and set of strategic priorities. The agreed LUMS vision was “to have a reputation as a leading international business and management school through a focus on research, education and engagement, anchored around the theme of responsible management. Following a thorough analysis of LUMS resource strengths and distinctive capabilities, five current, and future-oriented research themes for organisations and society were identified including Sustainability, Social Justice, Innovation, Health and Wellbeing, and the Cyber (Digital) Economy. Five strategic priorities requiring collaborative, engaged, interdisciplinary and partnership-oriented research were identified: namely, a focus on RRBM principles; expanding the boundaries of research excellence; stressing impact and engagement as key issues in research; developing interdisciplinary teams, implementing best practice in research evaluation impact and identifying funding sources, government, NGOs, business, etc., to develop impactful, responsible management research projects. Illustrations of impactful research efforts are then given including the creation of research centres as ‘hubs’ for the LUMS research ecosystem. The example of the LUMS innovation catalyst partnership for the Blackpool Research Initiative demonstrates how a potentially valuable project for a “green growth regional economy” was generated with LUMS,



government and business involvement. And LUMS link with the policy think tank – the Work Foundation – is important in understanding, and developing, initiatives for research on the future of work. As Katy indicates with an engaging metaphor (drawn from ice hockey) you need to “skate to where the puck’s going next” to anticipate areas in which collective know-how can create meaningful and impactful research programmes and initiatives.

Linda Barrington and Andrew Karolyi, Associate Dean of Strategy and Dean respectively, of the SC Johnson Cornell College of Business, also advocate the case for responsible, rigorous and impactful research through engagement. They cite Hoffman’s (2021) book on the engaged scholar to argue that research publication success measured in terms of high-quality citations and rankings “serves the academic institution primarily and falls short of serving the world at large.” They emphasise that “responsibility, rigour and impact with relevance constitute the ‘trifecta’ of intentions to which business higher education researchers must aspire.” They describe how cutting-edge, curiosity-driven scholarship (often of a strong disciplinary focus) should interact and engage with the more practical, and urgent, problems facing business and society. They suggest two main channels of communication for building scholarly, engaged research. First, Cornell has, over time, developed a strong and powerful ecosystem of centres, institutes and special programme initiatives for creating advantage through building, and reinforcing, rich industry and societal relationships and partnerships. This is enhanced through strong project-based experiential learning initiatives (e.g. the SMART project) which require all students to undertake, and offer solutions for, community-engaged projects with industry and government partners jointly moderated by Cornell business school faculty. Many of these projects also have an international dimension and a few are examined and explained in the paper.

Barrington and Karolyi demonstrate clearly how researchers have learned not only to explain how their engaged research has benefitted their stakeholders but also students who take a course sequence – the Engaged College initiative – and, thus, have improved their skills in, and deep awareness of, responsible management practices which they eventually carry into their post-college careers. They (the authors) conclude that while Cornell must always uphold the highest quality standards in its research, the relevance of that management research to all practitioners and stakeholders is just as critical as the rigorous nature and credibility of its academic research.

### CLUSTER 3

#### **Complex Societal Impact Projects Requiring Tri-Sector Collaboration and Cooperation**

Professor Sherif Kamel, has been a pioneering and influential dean at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. The paper catalogues how he designed, and implemented, an entrepreneurial ecosystem for Egypt to encourage growth in a developing economy. He describes it as “an effective and innovative ecosystem that is government-enabled, private sector-led, innovation-driven, youth-empowered and future-oriented.”

He notes that “the culture of entrepreneurship should be built bottom-up and top-down simultaneously in order to create a ‘buzz’ that can provide the required momentum, passion, drive and energy to help society think entrepreneurially.” As the educational partner in building this ecosystem Kamel describes how they solved the jigsaw puzzle of building the ecosystem, one step at a time over a period of around ten years. This required meaningful partnerships forged with the private sector, government and civil society organisations, that enabled the creation of a private sector-led Egypt-wide, effective, scalable and entrepreneurial ecosystem which was anchored by AUCE’s educational expertise.

Kamel is not resting on his laurels. His ecosystem may indeed be a ‘game-changer’ for both Middle East and African inclusive and impactful economic development. For example, he has founded an entrepreneurial education alliance in Africa involving business schools such as GIBS and Stellenbosch in South Africa and Lagos Business School in Nigeria to further nurture entrepreneurialism as a growth engine across the African continent.

Two examples, drawn from different regional economic and social development projects in Wales, further illustrate the pursuit of impactful social and economic development projects. Cardiff Business School in Wales has developed a well-earned reputation as a business school stressing the ‘public’ good – the social as well as economic dividend – and the ‘public value’ viewpoint (see Kitchener and Ashworth, 2023). It has focused on research issues associated with inclusive socio-economic growth, inequality and disadvantage in organisations and societies.

The first project ‘Making Wales an Anti-Racist Organisation’ was identified and formulated during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic when the devolved Welsh Government and its First Minister, became concerned about the disproportionate impact of the disease on ethnic minorities in Wales further highlighted by clear evidence of institutional racism. Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna, was asked by Wales First Minister and the Minister for Social Justice, to co-chair (with the top civil servant in Wales, the

Permanent Secretary of the Welsh government) and establish a Steering Group to develop a plan, with clear terms of reference, to eradicate institutional racism. Cardiff's Wales Centre for Public Policy provided assistance for the development of the plan which required the committed cooperation of relevant stakeholder groups from business, government, civil society and voluntary organisations. Following extensive debates, and round table meetings examining the viewpoints of all stakeholders, the steering group is now tasked with the implementation phase of the project in which the multiple and competing demands of stakeholders have to be addressed in terms of a balanced and flexible implementation plan.

Ogbonna, in his conclusions, points out that there are many lessons to be learned in developing and implementing plans in this area. First, to encourage, and improve collaborative networks between academics and all multi-sector stakeholders. Second, to expand the 'voices' of these stakeholders and to work more closely with disadvantaged communities. Third, and most importantly, business and management schools must take race seriously and lead the change towards anti-racism in Wales and elsewhere.

Professor Rick Delbridge, also from Cardiff, discusses his research goals and experience in leaving the 'theory cave' (sometimes called the 'iron cage' (Johnson and Starkey, 2023)) of narrow academic research for the richer pastures of impactful and interdisciplinary research approaches. His first challenge, as the Dean of Innovation for Cardiff University, was to build institutional structures within the university – the 'SPARK' initiative - to build a collaborative, interdisciplinary social science and business research park to enable practitioners and multi-disciplinary researchers to work together on projects designed and implemented jointly to ensure both strong problem formulation and impactful outcomes. Not surprisingly, given the layers of bureaucracy and challenges in navigating processes of university decision-making it took nine years to fully complete the research park. As 'SPARK' became close to reality, Rick chose to return to a more academic role and founded the 'Centre for Innovation Policy Research' (CIPR) and now works with a more focused interdisciplinary group of colleagues within SPARK drawn from the schools of business, planning and social sciences to attack policy and societal challenges from multiple perspectives, particularly the influence of geographic and political systems on outcomes. Rick's current work on innovation and policy practice in Wales is discussed in the paper and has focused on identifying new innovation solutions for policy problems in health, sustainability and improving local communities. He has also promoted novel approaches to the growth of commercial opportunities in the Cardiff Capital Region (the

largest cluster in Wales). He also discusses his 'ecosystem-based' conception of place-based innovation policy and outlines a 4Cs model for regional innovation policy. He reflects that in his own journey "I have not abandoned theory so much as more actively sought to have that theory and underpinning conceptual work inform research that is driven by problems and seeks to be more impactful on policy and practice."

Professor Luciano Barin-Cruz and his research colleagues at HEC Montreal, the leading francophone business school in Canada, explain the work of HEC's research ecosystem the Social Impact Hub, IDEOS, and then examine, in detail, one of its projects, SEED (Scaling Entrepreneurship for Economic Development). SEED's aim is to empower through ecosystem network approaches, positive development and social impact in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, Haiti, Tunisia and Colombia. They aim to do this by building a network of international and local promoters of entrepreneurship programmes in order to increase the capacities and capabilities of local programmes and improve the skills of social enterprises (often micro enterprises) and thereby strengthen the managerial competencies of civil society organisations. Put simply, IDEOS wants to leverage its entrepreneurial ecosystem to catalyse academic partnership collaborations between Canada and the Global South and establish meaningful networks (both academic and practitioner) to translate entrepreneurial knowledge for improving the inclusive economic, social and governance growth of developing countries.

The paper explains the SEED project and its methodology which involved understanding the ecosystem, developing local teaching content and training approaches (training the trainers), facilitating the delivery and analysis of the training programme and assessing its value with all the different stakeholders.

The lessons learned from the SEED programme have enabled many local communities to build their entrepreneurial and economic platforms and capabilities on a continuing basis. The academics involved have published papers in academic journals, white papers, reports, etc., in order to share and disseminate the results of their training programmes to a wider audience.

Importantly, the evidence of the social impact of this social innovation ecosystem has spread to its application to vulnerable, as well as underserved, indigenous communities in Canada. This is not surprising since the key success factor in the SEED programme has been the recognition in all developing countries of the importance of community assets, namely, the value of knowledge, skills and social networks as well as the growth of community identity and pride.

Clearly, the projects from Egypt, Wales and Canada and the Global South are fully encompassed within the so-called EDIR (Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and Respect) and inclusive growth agenda of business schools. Dean Morris Mthombeni's paper addresses one aspect of EDIR, namely, the role and importance of women in the business school sector. It focuses specifically, on the role of the leader, based on experiences in the evolution of GIBS (the Gordon Institute of Business Science) in the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

He first examines the current state of affairs about the contributions of women in business schools on a number of dimensions (and he 'crunches' the numbers in relation to these dimensions) namely: women as employees in business schools – what is their representation in terms of faculty and management positions? Women in the classroom – what is the gender balance in business school classrooms? Women as authors of journal articles and leading textbooks. Further, how often are they the lead authors or protagonists in well-known teaching cases? What is the level of female representation in emerging industries such as digital and computer technology? How often are women identified as leaders in such growth areas?

His view on the wide adoption of EDIR goals in business schools is that, at least, on the principle of gender equity, few business school leaders practice what they preach.

He then reviews GIBS exemplary progress on many of the above dimensions – over the 20 or so years of its existence it has already had one very successful academic team led by a female dean, Nicola Kleyn, and has strong gender representation in terms of faculty, research, faculty management roles and students in the classroom. He is rightly proud of these gains. His concern is that following COVID-19 the evidence shows a measurable loss of female leaders in society. He concludes with the strong and urgent view that "our role as business schools must be to produce a groundswell of female leaders who can fundamentally drive EDIR across society. This, in turn, will lead to greater female ownership and representation underscoring collective commitments to the UN's SDG 5, namely gender equality."

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## About the Author

Howard Thomas is Emeritus Professor at Singapore Management University and Senior Advisor at EFMD Global.