

From prestige to purpose: a dean's perspective on transforming research in business schools

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine how research in business schools can be realigned with evolving public expectations that increasingly emphasize social relevance, responsibility and public value. Situated within a broader global movement toward socially responsive knowledge production, the study investigates faculty career security-related symptoms and the underlying structural and epistemological root causes shaping research priorities in management education, while highlighting the role of business school deans as institutional stewards capable of facilitating this transition through internally led interventions and coordinated external activism. In doing so, the study clarifies how business school research can become more purpose-driven while sustaining scholarly rigor and legitimacy.

Design/methodology/approach – This conceptual study draws on the author's multiyear leadership experience as a sitting business school dean. The author's analysis is therefore grounded in practice-embedded insights gathered across strategic planning processes, faculty assessments, accreditation engagements, global forums and leadership dialogues.

Findings – The analysis reveals three distinct manifestations of the career security paradox across the academic life course of faculty members: risk aversion in early career stages, capital consolidation at mid-career, and legacy protection in senior ranks. These faculty-level dynamics are rooted in ecosystem-level structural and epistemological forces – including organizational inertia, institutional isomorphism and epistemic conformity – that collectively privilege scholarly prestige over social purpose. Addressing these entrenched dynamics requires sustained, dean-led stewardship capable of mobilizing collective action to reorient business school research toward socially grounded engagement and renewed public credibility.

Research limitations/implications – The absence of formal interview transcripts limits fine-grained linguistic analysis. Nonetheless, the longitudinal depth of the reflections and the institutional access afforded by my leadership role provide a robust foundation for conceptual insight. Future research should extend these arguments through comparative, empirical and multi-perspective studies that examine the mechanisms through which purpose-driven research cultures emerge across institutional contexts.

Practical implications – By clarifying “the what, the why and the how” of research addressing urgent social and environmental challenges, this paper contributes to aligning management scholarship with global priorities such as sustainability and responsible business practice. It advances a practice-oriented framework that identifies micro-level symptoms and macro-level structural and epistemological conditions constraining purpose-driven inquiry, while specifying a set of concrete, dean-led institutional interventions through which research agendas can be reoriented from prestige-based to purpose-driven logics.

Social implications – The author argues that business education and research should not only reward scholarly excellence (“doing well”) but also cultivate inquiry that produces demonstrable and consequential social value (“doing good”). Research that advances sustainability, equity, dignity and community well-being



becomes a source of public legitimacy, reaffirms the normative foundations of management scholarship, and sustains a more socially responsible model of knowledge production within business education.

Originality/value – This paper’s originality lies in its insider-informed analysis of the intertwined micro- and macro-level forces that constrain purpose-driven inquiry within business schools. By integrating faculty-level pressures with structural conditions and institutional logics, it elucidates the deeper sources of resistance to reform. The paper further explores how deans can integrate internal institutional change with coordinated external engagement to initiate systemic transformations that align research priorities more closely with the needs of society.

Keywords Social impact, Transformational leadership, Business school, Engaged scholarship, Business deans, Purpose-oriented research

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Management scholarship has long privileged narrow economic outcomes over broader social concerns, producing research that is theoretically refined yet insufficiently responsive to contemporary moral and practical challenges. Ghoshal (2005) characterizes this orientation as the dissemination of “bad theories,” while Alvesson *et al.* (2017) describe it as “meaningless research practices.” Although provocative, these critiques underscore a persistent misalignment between dominant research paradigms and evolving social expectations.

Global pressures have intensified this tension. The United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for knowledge production that advances human dignity, environmental stewardship and inclusive prosperity through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). Parallel signals have emerged within business education: AACSB has embedded social impact within its accreditation standards (AACSB, 2020), and the United Nations – supported Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) emphasize ethically grounded, practice-relevant scholarship (PRME, 2015).

As a result, business schools face mounting expectations to move beyond conventional scholarly inquiry toward research addressing urgent social challenges, including climate risk, inequality, corruption and institutional fragility. This mandate requires scholarship that aligns methodological rigor with social consequence. Yet progress remains uneven (e.g. Azmat *et al.*, 2023; Kolb *et al.*, 2017; Blass and Hayward, 2015; Muff *et al.*, 2013; Cornuel, 2007). Commitments to responsible management research often remain symbolic, driven by individual initiative rather than institutional mandate as evaluative regimes centered on journal prestige and citation metrics continue to constrain scholarly priorities (Burchell *et al.*, 2015).

Against this backdrop, I advance a framework that conceptualizes business schools as civic institutions embedded within regional ecosystems (Aguinis and Gibson, 2025; Ehlenz, 2018; Yamamura and Koth, 2023). The analysis integrates a reflective-practitioner orientation, engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) and analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), treating professional experience as an analytically generative resource (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Cunliffe, 2003).

My analysis is grounded in an extensive corpus of reflective field notes and interpretive memos generated through five years of sustained engagement in international academic forums within business education. These practice-embedded materials capture interactions with business school deans, faculty members at different stages of their academic careers, as well as advisory and governance bodies across institutions in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, North America and South America. In total, more than 200 entries were examined iteratively and longitudinally using reflexive thematic analysis to surface recurring issues, tensions and emergent practices relevant to the central research question. I further

contextualized these insights through interpretive engagement with publicly available speeches, communiqués, and strategic documents produced by key stakeholders in business education.

Drawing on this analysis, the findings suggest that shifting from prestige-oriented to purpose-driven scholarship requires moving beyond micro-level symptoms observable in faculty behavior to interrogate the macro-level structural and epistemological root causes that institutionalize and reproduce dominant research norms. Because these dynamics are systemic and path dependent, meaningful change is unlikely to arise from isolated or incremental initiatives. Advancing socially impactful research therefore depends on coordinated collective action at the meso level, enacted through dean-led institutional interventions capable of recalibrating the field-level criteria of scholarly legitimacy across the business education ecosystem.

2. The evolving role of business schools

The evolution of business schools is closely tied to shifts in corporate purpose. As [Rebeiz \(2024\)](#) shows, early American corporations were granted state privileges conditional on delivering public benefit. With the rise of managerial capitalism and the separation of ownership and control, this civic orientation eroded as shareholder primacy became the dominant metric of corporate and managerial success.

Business schools evolved in parallel. Their curricula, research agendas and institutional identities increasingly mirrored corporate priorities, privileging efficiency, competition and market logic over long-term human well-being. [Khurana \(2007\)](#) documents how early business schools, initially grounded in professional ideals akin to medicine and law, gradually adopted a commercialized model oriented toward market recognition rather than public service. [Dyllick \(2015\)](#) similarly notes that following the Ford and Carnegie reforms, business schools struggled to sustain public trust given their limited contributions to economic, environmental and moral responsibilities.

This institutional shift reoriented business research toward disciplinary purity and methodological abstraction, often at the expense of practical and normative relevance. [Mintzberg \(2004\)](#) called for grounding management education in the lived practice of managing, while [Bennis and O'Toole \(2005\)](#) argued for restoring professional purpose. [Datar et al. \(2010\)](#) warned that analytical rigor frequently crowded out ethical reasoning, and [Alvesson and Sandberg \(2013\)](#) criticized the dominance of incremental “gap-spotting.” [Alajoutsijärvi et al. \(2015\)](#) further identified a legitimacy paradox in which scientification and corporatization enhance academic status while eroding public credibility.

Recent global crises – including climate change, widening social inequality, geopolitical instability and recurrent economic shocks – have intensified calls to reconsider the role and identity of business schools, voiced by a diverse set of constituencies ranging from policymakers and civic organizations to students and global governance institutions, notably the United Nations. These pressures have renewed appeals for management education grounded in dignity, responsibility and humility ([Pirson, 2020](#)) and heightened the need for credible frameworks of responsible management as a foundation of institutional legitimacy ([Snelson-Powell et al., 2016](#)).

In light of these developments, reliance on inherited managerial orthodoxies that privilege corporate performance over public well-being has become increasingly untenable. Business schools are now expected to generate research that creates public value and responds to challenges facing society. Their legitimacy rests on this civic mandate ([Podolny, 2009](#)), and claims to value neutrality are increasingly untenable given the ethical and political assumptions embedded in all scholarly inquiry ([Tsui, 2016](#)).

Yet research missions remain anchored in incentive systems that prioritize journal prestige and theoretical abstraction over relevance (Tsui, 2013). These orientations spill over into business education, helping to explain why Pfeffer and Fong (2002) found little evidence that prevailing MBA programs enhance managerial effectiveness or that management research meaningfully influences practice. This disjuncture persists despite rhetorical commitments to social impact, as institutional resource constraints, faculty resistance and ambiguous external expectations continue to limit substantive change (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

Business schools therefore stand at a critical juncture. The growing gap between academic reward systems and public needs renders traditional research models increasingly inadequate. Momentum is building toward a responsible business school that aligns research, education and institutional outcomes with the expectations of a contemporary society. As Table 1 suggests, shifting from prestige-oriented to purpose-driven research requires deep cultural change, reconfigured incentives, interdisciplinary engagement and transformational leadership. Crucially, this transition does not abandon established research traditions but expands them to place public-interest concerns at the center of scholarly inquiry.

Guided by the theoretical framework shown in Figure 1, the following section examines the “what” of the micro-level dynamics that constrain faculty engagement in purpose-driven research, the “why” of the institutional root causes – namely, structural and epistemological barriers – and the “how” of dean-level pathways through which transformational change from prestige-oriented to purpose-driven scholarly inquiry can be initiated.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 *Micro-level symptoms: the career security paradox*

The career security paradox captures the tension faculty members face between pursuing research that secures career advancement and engaging in scholarship oriented toward social relevance and personal meaning – two aims that remain structurally misaligned within business schools. As summarized in Table 2, the paradox illustrates how risk aversion, path dependence and legacy-protection considerations jointly shape research choices across the academic life course. At its core, concerns for career security reinforce dominant research norms, constraining engagement with socially consequential scholarship and generating normative dissonance between espoused commitments to public relevance and prestige-oriented institutional logics.

The risk aversion toward pursuing purpose-oriented research is particularly pronounced at early career stages. Junior faculty operate within evaluation systems that privilege publication in elite, discipline-based journals, rendering journal rankings and citation counts central to scholarly legitimacy. These systems narrow the range of acceptable research questions (Aguinis *et al.*, 2014) and privilege theoretical abstraction over practical relevance (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). As leading academic journals emphasize methodological rigor over real-world applicability (Mingers and Willmott, 2013), early-career scholars face strong structural disincentives to pursue research with social impact.

Engaged and purpose-driven research typically requires transdisciplinary and dialogical approaches that extend beyond disciplinary boundaries. Although responsible management education scholarship calls for interdisciplinary collaboration (Beckmann and Schaltegger, 2020) and practitioner-engaged inquiry (Gröschl and Gabaldon, 2018), business schools continue to reward disciplinary purity. These tendencies are reinforced by evaluation-competence gaps, as reviewers and promotion committees often lack the frameworks or experience needed to assess engaged or community-partnered scholarship. Under such conditions, scholars rationally conform to disciplinary models that secure career advancement.

Table 1. From prestige-oriented to purpose-driven research: conceptual distinctions

Dimension	Conventional (Prestige-Driven)	Responsible (Purpose-Driven)
Core mission of research	Predominantly focused on institutional prestige	Primarily oriented toward social well-being
Primary purpose of scholarly inquiry	Elite publication and academic reputation	Social impact, policy relevance and sustainable practice
Thematic orientation of intellectual contribution	Typically abstract, discipline-bound and theory-driven	Usually problem-driven, context-sensitive and interdisciplinary
Epistemological stance (knowledge orientation)	Mainly positivist, generalizable and method-centric	Predominantly pluralist, interpretive and engaged
Evaluation logic (assessment criteria)	Emphasis on journal rankings, citations and publication counts	Focus on social impact, public value and societal resilience
Faculty incentives (reward structures)	Low-risk topics aligned with elite journals	Innovative, socially relevant and potentially higher-risk inquiry
Academic career trajectories	Early lock-in to publication-driven paths	Support for impact-oriented engagement across career stages
Institutional logic (underlying norms)	Prestige competition and ranking conformity	Responsibility, public purpose and co-creation
Stakeholder engagement	Generally limited and often symbolic engagement	Commonly deep and sustained partnerships with external actors
Time horizon of research endeavors	Typically short-term and publication-driven	Typically long-term and challenge-driven
Impact definition (values and outcomes)	Academic visibility and citation influence	Measurable social, environmental and economic outcomes
Governance oversight and alignment	Chiefly rankings and accreditation compliance	Primarily alignment with public value and societal well-being
Sources of legitimacy (basis of credibility)	Commonly elite journals and academic reputation	Centered on community trust, policy influence and ethical standing
Research outputs for original knowledge	Primarily academic journal articles	Academic journal articles alongside practice- and policy-oriented outputs

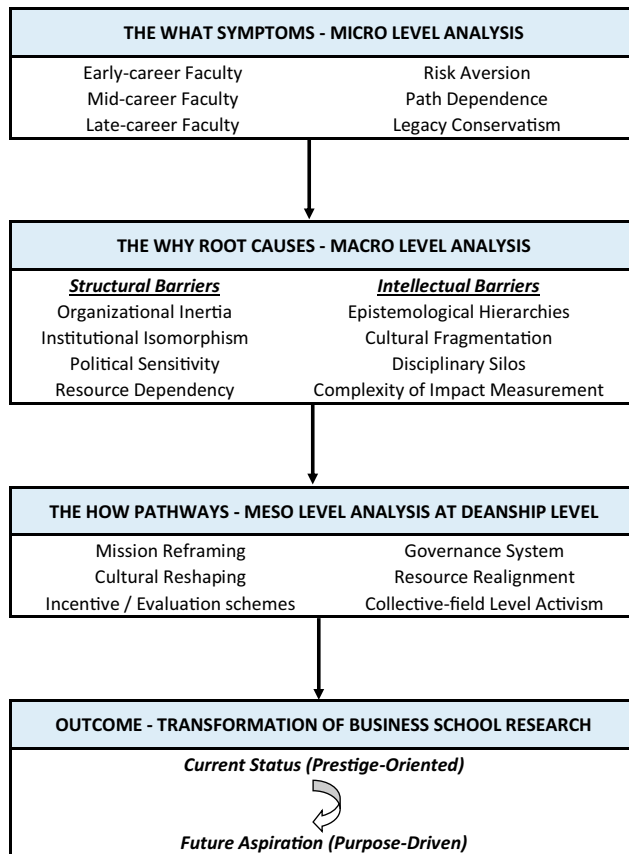


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for transforming business school research from prestige to purpose

These disincentives are compounded by temporal misalignment between social impact and academic evaluation. Social impact typically unfolds through diffuse, relational and long-term processes (Watermeyer and Hedgecoe, 2016; Donovan, 2011; George *et al.*, 2016), whereas tenure and promotion systems favor rapid and visible outputs. Early-career scholars who fail to accumulate high-status publications quickly face heightened advancement risks (Adler and Hansen, 2012), particularly given the time-intensive nature of practice-oriented research and limited institutional support.

Uncertainty surrounding the measurement of social impact further weakens its valuation. Impact often materializes through nonlinear pathways – such as policy influence, organizational change or shifts in public discourse – that resist standardized metrics (Penfield *et al.*, 2014; Esteves *et al.*, 2012), while attribution challenges complicate causal assessment (Bornmann, 2013). These difficulties are amplified by the contested and under-specified nature of “responsible management” as an evaluative construct (Nonet *et al.*, 2016), undermining its legitimacy within dominant assessment regimes.

Table 2. The career security paradox inhibiting purpose-driven research

Career stage	Motivational driver	Manifestation of paradox
Early-career faculty	Risk aversion	Constrained conformity among early-career faculty, shaped by coercive and normative evaluative pressures tied to tenure and promotion, which channel research effort toward prestige-oriented outputs while discouraging engagement in purpose-driven scholarship perceived as professionally risky
Mid-career faculty	Capital consolidation	Professional bifurcation among mid-career faculty, driven by entrenched evaluative regimes and normative expectations, whereby conventionally valued research is prioritized to consolidate accumulated career capital, while impact-oriented work is marginalized as administrative demands and sunk-cost investments intensify
Late-career faculty	Legacy protection	Path-dependent conservatism among late-career faculty, reinforced by accumulated status, reputational capital, and legacy protection considerations, which sustains adherence to dominant evaluative logics and limits willingness to legitimize or actively sponsor purpose-driven research

At mid-career, increased autonomy is frequently accompanied by academic capital consolidation. By this stage, academic identities are firmly embedded within disciplinary communities and validated through conventional performance indicators, making shifts toward engaged scholarship appear professionally risky. Many scholars respond by bifurcating their scholarly identities, prioritizing disciplinary research for career security while marginalizing socially oriented work. Given the centrality of disciplinary identity to academic belonging (Henkel, 2005), such departures entail both professional and psychological costs. Expanding teaching, service, and mentoring demands further constrain time for exploratory research, while institutional cultures limit mid-career scholars' capacity to reshape evaluation systems (Hazelkorn, 2015; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2014).

Late-career faculty, especially those in leadership roles, possess the greatest capacity to shape prevailing research norms. Through service on promotion and tenure committees, editorial boards, accreditation bodies and funding councils, they exert disproportionate influence over what counts as scholarly value (Wickert *et al.*, 2021). Yet the evaluative paradigms that underwrote their own academic success – emphasizing theoretical sophistication, methodological rigor and elite publication – may also engender legacy protection. Having invested heavily in demanding and selective career trajectories, senior scholars may be inclined, often implicitly, to preserve the standards that validated their hard-won scholarly identities and reputations. Consequently, they may favor academic reward systems that reproduce prestige-oriented research over purpose-driven scholarly inquiry with practical relevance and impact (Aguinis *et al.*, 2012). When senior scholars nonetheless champion engaged and impactful scholarship, their influence can be instrumental – legitimizing alternative research forms, mentoring junior faculty, and advancing reforms in

evaluation criteria, resource allocation and research infrastructure, while enabling field-level change through accreditation, editorial, and funding policies.

3.2 Macro-level root causes: the latent institutional entrenchment

Business schools were historically designed to preserve intellectual continuity rather than respond to shifting environmental and societal challenges. Their evolution as semiautonomous disciplines, marked by distinctive epistemic cultures and evaluative criteria, has contributed to the marginalization of practice-oriented, problem-focused and community-engaged scholarship. Such work is often construed as a departure from conventional academic trajectories and receives limited institutional support. Organizational inertia reinforces this pattern through entrenched routines and hierarchical decision structures that privilege stability over adaptation. Dynamic models of inertia show that organizations reproduce established commitments even amid environmental disruption (Kelly and Amburgey, 1991; Trowler, 2002).

These tendencies are amplified by institutional isomorphism. Through mimetic processes, business schools conform to field-level expectations that normalize discipline-based specialization, inherited evaluation mechanisms and standardized scholarly outputs (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Within these path-dependent arrangements, even modest shifts in research priorities or resource allocations encounter resistance. Narratives of past success further sediment these assumptions, inhibiting critical reassessment (Geiger and Antonacopoulou, 2009). Inertia and isomorphism thus operate recursively, producing institutional sedimentation that constrains adaptation to evolving social demands.

Epistemological hierarchies constitute an additional barrier. Business research has long privileged positivist, quantitative and discipline-bounded approaches, establishing an epistemic orthodoxy that shapes what counts as legitimate knowledge and which questions are deemed researchable. Although qualitative, interpretive and participatory methods – including ethnography and action research – appear in leading journals, their acceptance remains contingent on conformity to dominant norms (McNulty *et al.*, 2013). Doctoral training, editorial practices and promotion systems reinforce these hierarchies, systematically disadvantaging context-rich and practice-oriented inquiry.

Within this context, business school deans face persistent challenges in developing evaluation systems capable of recognizing the diffuse and long-term pathways through which social impact materializes. Tools such as narrative impact statements, case studies and sustainability pledges risk devolving into ceremonial compliance, leaving underlying incentive structures intact. Faculty therefore gravitate toward outputs legible within existing evaluative regimes rather than those most likely to generate practical benefit. Without more nuanced and context-sensitive assessment frameworks, social impact remains rhetorically endorsed yet structurally marginalized. As Doherty *et al.* (2015) caution, responsible management education cannot function as a symbolic add-on without jeopardizing institutional credibility.

3.3 Meso-level dynamics: dean-led transformation

As stewards of institutional identity and strategy, deans occupy a pivotal position in triggering a shift from prestige-driven to purpose-driven research cultures. Such transformational leadership begins with articulating a mission that functions not as symbolic rhetoric but as a governing framework, positioning institutions as socially embedded actors whose responsibilities extend beyond knowledge production to sustained public engagement (Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2020). Enacting this mission requires iterative strategic planning, sustained faculty consultation and aligned governance mechanisms – including

hiring priorities, research clusters and workload policies – that collectively signal the legitimacy of socially engaged scholarship.

Deans can further reinforce this shift by recalibrating evaluative frameworks to recognize societal contributions alongside traditional indicators of scholarly productivity and by embedding these criteria within annual reviews, mid-career evaluations and promotion processes. Complementary incentives – such as seed funding for exploratory or partnership-based research, course releases for impact-oriented projects and visible institutional recognition – can strengthen these signals. Beyond individual institutions, regional consortia and cross-institutional research networks provide platforms for shared learning, comparative experimentation and collaboration on pressing societal challenges, enabling faculty to codevelop research agendas, pool methodological expertise and pursue externally funded, multi-country projects. Through such partnerships, deans can help sustain momentum toward research cultures that remain academically rigorous while becoming more socially consequential.

It is important to note, however, that institutional reform is insufficient when pursued in isolation. Field-level evaluative regimes, anchored in journal prestige, citation metrics and disciplinary purity, constrain any single school's capacity to redefine scholarly value. Enduring change therefore depends on coordinated external action among business deans to influence accreditation bodies, ranking agencies and scholarly associations. Such engagement is constitutive of field-level reconfiguration, enabling deans to contest systemic pressures and recalibrate dominant evaluative logics. Absent this collective effort, internal reforms are likely to remain symbolic; pursued jointly, they gain legitimacy, coherence and cumulative force toward a more responsible and publicly oriented trajectory of business scholarship – one in which impact, engagement and public purpose become central criteria of scholarly excellence. As [Blass and Hayward \(2015\)](#) observe, the development of globally responsible leaders exceeds the remit of any single institution and instead constitutes a genuinely collective endeavor.

4. Research limitations and future scholarly implications

This study intentionally foregrounds the role of deans as institutional stewards capable of reshaping the research culture of business schools. While this focus advances the paper's conceptual aim of theorizing leadership as a lever for shifting scholarship from prestige-oriented to purpose-driven inquiry, it necessarily limits attention to other actors whose influence is more distributed and informal. Early-career academics, doctoral students, research administrators, journal editors and external partners also shape research orientations by reinforcing or contesting prevailing evaluative norms. Consistent with prior work on institutional change, transformation in academic fields rarely proceeds through linear chains of authority; instead, it emerges through negotiated interactions, incremental adjustments and subtle forms of resistance. Accordingly, the insights developed here should be interpreted as analytically transferable rather than universally generalizable, in line with the logic of reflective-practitioner research. At the same time, by clarifying leadership-centered mechanisms of change, the study strengthens the foundation for future research examining how multiple actors and levels interact to reorient business school research from prestige toward purpose across diverse institutional contexts.

[Table 3](#) outlines a proposed research framework for transitioning scholarship in business schools from prestige to purpose, moving beyond rhetorical commitments to social impact toward research that is credibly aligned with societal needs and sustainable development. Specifically, the framework identifies interrelated research themes spanning leadership and strategic direction, incentives and career systems, governance and institutional architecture,

Table 3. Future research themes supporting purpose-driven research

Research themes	Research questions	Methodological approaches
Leadership and strategic direction	How do deans and senior leaders shape the institutionalization of social impact in business school research?	Comparative case studies; elite interviews; process tracing
Incentives and career systems	How do promotion and evaluation systems influence faculty engagement with social impact over time?	Longitudinal surveys; archival analysis; policy analysis
Governance and institutional architecture	How do governance structures enable or constrain the integration of social impact into research missions?	Qualitative comparative analysis; document studies; institutional ethnography
Cognitive and cultural dynamics	How do norms, narratives, and symbolic practices shape academic attitudes toward socially impactful research?	Discourse analysis; narrative inquiry; ethnography
Field-Level pressures	How do rankings, accreditation regimes, and journals shape the future of social impact in business schools?	Network analysis; policy mapping; expert interviews
Social impact measurement	How can credible and comparable frameworks for assessing social impact in management research be developed?	Delphi studies; indicator development; design science
Interdisciplinary collaboration	How do cross-disciplinary partnerships affect the depth and legitimacy of social impact?	Multi-site case studies; collaboration mapping
Global and contextual variation	How do national systems and regulatory environments shape the legitimacy of purpose-driven research?	Cross-national comparison; configurational methods

cognitive and cultural dynamics and field-level pressures, as well as issues of social impact measurement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and global contextual variation, which together shape the conditions under which purpose-driven research becomes legitimate and sustainable. In this context, it is worth noting that purpose-driven inquiry need not be cast as a rejection of traditional metrics of scholarly excellence; rather, it should be understood as a complementary mode of research that enriches scholarship by introducing a much-needed social dimension, thereby expanding the capacity of management research to advance theory in ways that ultimately benefit society at large.

5. Conclusion

Business schools face intensifying global pressures to contribute meaningfully to a more sustainable, just, and ethically grounded future (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016; Thomas and Cornuel, 2012). As corporations confront heightened scrutiny regarding their environmental, social and governance responsibilities, the question for business schools has shifted from how they produce knowledge to what purposes that knowledge ultimately serves and whom it benefits (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994). Purpose-driven research that generates tangible public value is increasingly central to sustaining the legitimacy of management education (Wilson and Thomas, 2012).

A broader reorientation of scholarly purpose would bring business schools into closer alignment with prevailing social expectations. Notably, other academic disciplines – such as the natural sciences, health sciences and engineering – have long sustained research agendas attuned to public needs, often with the support of major funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health (Bormmann, 2013). In this

light, business schools risk falling further behind this broader movement unless they expand their scholarly horizons, cultivate cross-border collaborations, and adopt more diverse methodological repertoires capable of addressing the multidimensional challenges confronting contemporary societies.

Many business deans aspire to exercise transformational leadership by rearticulating institutional missions, reshaping organizational cultures and recalibrating incentive systems. They likewise seek to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, legitimize engaged forms of scholarship and cultivate enduring partnerships oriented toward the advancement of the common good. Yet durable transformation cannot rest solely on the efforts of individual leaders, however capable or committed. It instead requires coordinated and collective action among deans willing to engage the broader evaluative ecosystem – including accreditation bodies, institutional ranking authorities, journal editorial boards and funding agencies – to reshape the global norms and standards through which scholarly legitimacy and value are constituted.

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