

A call for action in Management Research: *Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*

Different voices in academia in practically all disciplines, including management, have been calling for more transparent, actionable and responsible research with societal impact (George *et al.*, 2016; Tsui, 2016). These voices represent the views of different organizations. A relevant example is the Responsible Research for Business and Management, RRB_M[1] a virtual organization initially developed by a group of 24 leading management scholars in 2014, but now a much larger community with more than 1,200 supporters around the world. RRB_M also has the endorsement and partnership of many management education organizations including the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the European Federation of Management Development, Principles for Responsible Management Education, the Aspen Institute's Business and Society Program, the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative and many business schools worldwide.

Consider the following statements by RRB_M (2020:14) conveying the need for research with societal impact:

The current system is falling short of fulfilling our collective potential. The goal for researchers and their institutions should include *business and societal impact*, not simply to publish in a small set of journals with limited readership. The results of research are an important input into the curriculum and are the basis for informing public policies and advising best practices[...]. We encourage *increasing the diversity of topics, methods, disciplinary perspectives, assumptions, contexts, and dissemination methods*. Diversity should be a central part of our research vision, with societal impact as a central goal of responsible research. The research ecosystem has a web of interrelated players. Each has a role to play in encouraging and supporting efforts to move the current citation-based publication-oriented ecosystem to one that supports the principles associated with responsible research.

Another recent example of a virtual organization calling for more transparent, actionable and responsible research is the *Impact Scholar Community*[2], a group that emerged from the Organizations and the Natural Environment: A Division of the Academy of Management. This group of organizational scholars and educators conducts research aiming to solve real-world problems. They define impact as evident when:

- the research changes how organizations and decision-makers think and act; and
- academic positions foster positive change beyond the immediate research insights.

As claims have multiplied over recent years, these initiatives convey the need to produce actionable, transparent and responsible research for a large group of stakeholders. The editorial team of *Management Research: Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management* or *MRJAM* fully supports these initiatives. In accordance with the principles of research impact, Emerald, our editorial house, launched the Real Impact initiative[3]. The general goal of this initiative is summarized here:

Research that has real world impact goes beyond citation counts and makes a difference. It's about communities joining together to find solutions that result in positive change. We refer to impact as the provable effects of research in the real world. We appreciate it's not always easy for academics and researchers to see the impact of their work. That's why we've launched "Real Impact" to aid the cause and call on research communities to come together and break down barriers.



The *MRJIAM* editorial team recognize that traditional markers of influence such as number of citations are not sufficient to create impact. We and our editorial house, Emerald, believe that we have a key responsibility to not only support the impact agenda but also challenge outdated approaches to measuring effects. As a consequence, *MRJIAM* also supports Emerald's impact strategy, which is centered on three key points:

- (1) Support the community of practice to overcome barriers to impact, working in partnership with key agencies to strengthen connections between research and society.
- (2) Challenge simplistic and outdated approaches to impact, shifting beyond metrics and celebrating impact of all shapes and sizes.
- (3) Drive impact literacy in the research sector, including within Emerald itself, championing knowledge, the development of skills and the development of new tools and innovative approaches.

How do we align our own editorial decisions to Emerald's strategy? We present some initial blueprints to guide the editorial team, reviewers and authors.

Blueprint 1 – Part 1: practical forum

Problem – We will ask a group of stakeholders to select a problem pervasive in Iberoamerican countries. COVID-19 clearly stands out. Other examples include gender (in) equality in work settings, violence, corruption, poverty and the quality of leadership. These problems represent what organizational scholars call “grand challenges” or “wicked problems” (Ferraro *et al.*, 2015; van Tulder, 2018). How do organizations in Iberoamerica respond to these problems?

Process – We will invite consultants, government representatives, managers and entrepreneurs across Iberoamerican countries to answer in writing a set of questions addressing the nature of the problem. We will provide participants with parameters such as maximum number of words to answer each question, timeline for responding and number of examples to be used.

Writing – The editor (or invited editor) responsible for contacting consultants and responsible for managing this process will contribute an introductory statement framing the nature of the problem and a conclusion highlighting key takeaways.

Blueprint 1 – Part 2: academic forum

Problem – We will also develop and implement an academic forum addressing the same problem as that tackled by the practical forum. For this purpose, we will contact researchers from different Iberoamerican countries and ask them to answer the same set of questions provided to those participating in the practical forum.

Process and Writing – Both the process and the writing will mimic that of the practical forum. The editor (or invited editor) will write an introductory note framing the nature of the problem and a conclusion highlighting key takeaways. A final note will focus on integrating both the practical and the academic forums.

Blueprint 2 – Short pieces

Problem – The editorial team will call for short pieces, between 2,000 and 3,000 words, addressing real-world problems. We will provide a structure for the short papers, including specific content and format.

Process – The editorial team will accept suggestions in the form of calls to address specific Iberoamerican problems. Please contact the editorial team with your suggestions or ideas. Alternatively, the editorial team will directly contact authors interested in writing short pieces focusing on these problems. For example, the editorial team is currently working with authors around Iberoamerica to develop a special issue on COVID-19.

Editor's responsibilities – The editor (or invited editor) of each issue will be responsible for making sure that authors follow all instructions and requirements. The editor will also write an introductory article framing the nature of the call and highlighting takeaways from the articles selected for publication.

We trust that this set of guidelines will help scholars as well as practitioners around Iberoamerica integrate research and practice and thus contribute to the resolution of societal “grand challenges.”

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Notes

1. For more information about the RRBm network and work, see: www.rrbm.network
2. For more information about the Impact Scholar Community initiative, see: <http://one.aom.org/impact-scholar-community>
3. For more information about Emerald's Real Impact initiative, see: www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/about/our-stance/our-impact

References

- Ferraro, F., Etzion, D. and Gehman, J. (2015), “Tackling grand challenges pragmatically: robust action revisited”, *Organization Studies*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 363-390.
- George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A. and Tihanyi, L. (2016), “Understanding and tackling grand challenges through management research”, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 59 No. 6, pp. 1880-1895.
- Tsui, A.S. (2016), “Reflections on the so-called value-free ideal: a call for responsible science in the business schools”, *Cross Cultural and Strategic Management*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 4-28.
- van Tulder, R. (2018), *Business and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Framework for Effective Corporate Involvement*, School of Management, Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

Further reading

Co-founders of RRBm (2017 revised 2020), *A Vision for Responsible Research in Business and Management: Striving for Useful and Credible Knowledge*, Position Paper, accessible from www.rrbm.network