

Executive Briefing¹

A Vision of Responsible Research in Business and Management

15 November 2017

By the Founding Members of the Community for Responsible Research in Business and Management²

INTRODUCTION

This briefing presents a vision of business schools and scholars worldwide having successfully transformed their research toward *responsible science*, producing credible knowledge that is ultimately useful for addressing problems important to business and society. This vision is based on the belief that business can be a force for good when informed by knowledge from responsible research. Research is the foundation of business education and practice, yet research in business schools has been criticized for being weak in integrity and low in relevance. Responsible research ensures the production of credible knowledge that can be used to inform progressive government policies and promote positive business and management practices. It introduces seven principles to guide research with four focusing primarily on the usefulness of knowledge and three on the credibility of knowledge. It ends with a call for actions to transform business and management research toward achieving humanity's highest aspirations for a better world.

VISION 2030

In 2030, business and management schools worldwide are widely admired for their contributions to societal well-being. Business and management scholarship has been central to solving society's challenges, such as the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Research is timely and cutting edge, producing well-grounded knowledge on pressing problems. Both schools and scholars are committed to the principles of responsible research, which are embedded in the core curriculum of doctoral education and shape how students at all levels are educated. The results of responsible research are widely taught in the classroom, educating students as responsible leaders in their chosen professions. Research has helped students, organizations, and communities of all kinds to develop effective systems leading to high and responsible economic performance, great innovations, positive employee and customer well-being, a thriving natural environment, and strong communities. Many schools have focused areas of research and centers of excellence in their chosen areas of expertise. Standards of excellence are attuned to local conditions and the needs of surrounding communities; schools in different parts of the world have followed various paths to achieve excellence. Many schools have contributed valuable knowledge to support humanity's highest aspirations within the planetary boundaries, including poverty alleviation; access to food, clean water, and education; sustainable consumption and use of natural resources; greater gender and social equality; inclusion; growing prosperity; fair wealth distribution; and a responsible and resilient financial sector. Business leaders and government officials are frequent guests in business and management schools, seeking advice on policies and offering support for research on issues that need understanding. Business and management research is a model of "responsible science" after a major transformation that began in 2017.

¹ The content of this executive briefing is based on the position paper "A Vision of Responsible Research in Business and Management: Striving for Useful and Credible Knowledge" (cRRBM, 2017).

² The founding members of the Community for Responsible Research in Business and Management is a group of 28 scholars worldwide dedicated to the advancement of responsible science in business and management. Their names are listed at the end of this briefing. Direct correspondence email to: atsui@nd.edu.

PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE SCIENCE³

Members of the research ecosystem include many stakeholders including university and school leadership, senior scholars, journal editors, business executives, funders, accreditation agencies, students and alumni, and society at large (as taxpayers and beneficiaries of responsible business education and organizational practices). Responsible research depends on an ecosystem that supports, recognizes, and rewards, in a coordinated fashion, the following seven principles.

Principle 1—Service to Society: Development of knowledge that benefits business and the broader society, locally and globally, for the ultimate purpose of creating a better world.

Principle 2—Stakeholder Involvement: Research that engages different stakeholders in the research process, without compromising the independence of inquiry.

Principle 3—Impact on Stakeholders: Research that has an impact on diverse stakeholders, especially research that contributes to better business and a better world.

Principle 4—Valuing Both Basic and Applied Contributions: Contributions in both the theoretical domain to create fundamental knowledge and in applied domains to address pressing and current issues.

Principle 5—Valuing Plurality and Multidisciplinary Collaboration: Diversity in research themes, methods, forms of scholarship, types of inquiry, and interdisciplinary collaboration to reflect the plurality and complexity of business and societal problems.

Principle 6—Sound Methodology: Research that implements sound scientific methods and processes in both quantitative and qualitative or both theoretical and empirical domains.

Principle 7—Broad Dissemination: Diverse forms of knowledge dissemination that collectively advance basic knowledge and practice.

SCIENCE FOR BETTER BUSINESS AND A BETTER WORLD

Our world is facing challenging tensions in all aspects of society: economic, political, technological, social, and environmental. All 195 member-states of the United Nations have pledged to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity within the next 15 years.⁴ The National Academy of Engineering encourages the profession to meet 14 grand challenges in the areas of education, artificial intelligence, healthcare, clean water, energy, urban infrastructure, or cyberspace security.⁵ Leaders in government, business, and civil societies have identified a myriad of similar challenges. Business and management research can do much to contribute to meeting these challenges by discovering processes and systems to improve collective work at the organizational and national levels, in areas such as responsible use of financial resources, accounting methods for assessing societal impacts, innovative products and services for the bottom of the pyramid, sustainable marketing and supply chain, logistics to reach currently inaccessible regions, attention to both wealth creation and wealth distribution, to name a few. To realize Vision 2030 will require concurrent and coordinated actions across all relevant stakeholder groups with the common goal of valuing rigorous scholarship that addresses important challenges and produces actionable knowledge. We call for action by each of the stakeholder groups to support the seven principles and to serve as pioneers in responsible research. Science in business and management can live up to its obligation and realize its potential through engaging in responsible research that we humbly propose.

³ The words “research” and “science” are synonymous in this paper.

⁴ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

⁵ <http://www.engineeringchallenges.org/challenges.aspx>

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Co-signers

85 senior scholars and leaders, representing multiple business disciplines (including 30 school, university and business leaders) from 75 institutions in 21 countries, provided valuable suggestions that greatly improved the paper during the six-month consultation period, April to September 2017. The names and affiliations of the full list of co-signers are on the “Supporters” page of the website RRBM.network.