Responsible Research in Business Schools:

A Vision and an Action Plan toward a Science in Service of Society

A. Background

Academics, deans, members of the business community as well as other business school stakeholders have broadly criticized current research practices in business schools (see article "Tsui: Reconnecting with the business world: Socially responsible scholarship, EFMD Global Focus, January 2015). The criticisms include emphasis on theory over attention on the importance or relevance of the topic being studied, methodological rigor over the quality of the data and appropriateness of the samples, and quantity of papers in specific journals over quality and impact, with an erroneous assumption that the quality of outlet equates the quality of the paper published in it. It has been further argued that business school research has a systemic ideological bias, addressing economic more than social interests, and studying large corporations more than emerging new firms in new contexts. Critics are also taking issue with the way researchers are trained, mentored and incentivized, and that the talents of our researchers are being misappropriated. Leading scholars have written many articles that discuss a variety of such problems (see Appendix A for a partial bibliography of these works).

A recent Wharton School study (Terwiesch & Ulrich, 2014) estimated the cost of an A-journal article to be about $400,000, counting only the salary of the research faculty. Every year, many millions are spent on research that are published but not read or used (see Aguinis, et al., 2012). Clearly, these self-criticisms are positive motivation for change. There are some movements in a constructive direction (see Appendix B for some initiatives), but much more are needed. This bottom-up project, led by a group of leading scholars in the various disciplines of business schools world-wide, aims to identify opportunities for business schools to contribute to the increasing complex societies through transformation of their research priorities and approaches. Our purpose is not to advocate a specific position but to invite joint exploration of opportunities to increase the social impact of business school research in society.

B. Vision

Vision statement: "Responsible business school research in service of society." Our vision is that business schools will adopt research priorities and practices that will produce reliable and useful knowledge to address the challenges of the contemporary contexts with major technological, economic, political, and social changes and with increasing diversity in the types of organizations and management practices globally.

C. Process

The project will first identify and discuss actionable opportunities in a **position paper** through inviting inputs from both scholars and practitioners in different sectors of global society. A second step is to invite debates, through the Internet, conference and other platforms, on these opportunities by engaging all affected parties interested in having a voice and a role in transforming research toward the vision. In a third phase, we will seek to identify and undertake relevant steps to encourage critical stakeholders to engage in changing the critical parameters toward responsible

research in service of society by business schools. Ensuring Impact and Successful Dissemination/Transformation

The research enterprise involves many inter-connected groups and deeply entrenched due to the mutually reinforcing mechanisms among these groups. To ensure the significant change we envision, we need to identify the relevant levers for change. These may involve:

- Business school associations and accreditation bodies (EFMD, AACSB, AAPBS, CEEMAN, CLADEA, ABS, etc.)
- Ranking agencies (e.g. FT Ranking, BusinessWeek, Handelsblatt, Multi URank)
- Journal publishers (e.g. Sage, Wiley, Elsevier, et al.)
- Professional associations (e.g., AoM, AEA, AAA, AFA, AMA, AOMA, EURAM, BAOM, AAOM, etc.) that publish academic journals
- Journals in all the business and management related disciplines
- Global Compact PRME, GRLI, 50+20, ABIS
- Granting agencies: U.S. NSF, UK Research Council, other national research grant institutions.
- Business schools around the world

D. Project Team

The project team will constitute leading scholars in the core disciplines within business schools and a group of deans. The former is responsible for developing the position paper and engaging the stakeholders on the debate and discussion of the position paper. The latter is responsible for reviewing proposed ideas, serving as spokespersons, and providing guidance on the project.

Project team composition should ensure broad coverage of:

- Geography: North America, Europe, South America, Asia
- Fields: Finance/accounting/economics, marketing, operations, management

Scholar members by discipline (to date):

Accounting and Finance

1. **A. Rashad Abdel-Khalik**, Professor of Accountancy and V.K. Zimmerman Professor of International Accounting, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; founding editor of *The Accounting Literature*; past Senior Editor and Managing Editor of *The Accounting Review*; Senior Editor of *The International Journal of Accounting*.
2. **Franklin Allen**, Professor of Finance and Economics, Imperial College, London; Past President, American Finance Association, Western Finance Association, etc.; past Executive Editor of *Review of Financial Studies*; current Managing Editor of *Review of Finance*.
3. **Maureen O'Hara**, Robert W. Purcell Professor of Finance, Cornell University; past President, American Finance Association, Western Finance Association, Financial Management Association, Society for Financial Studies and the International Atlantic Economic Society; past Executive Editor of the *Review of Financial Studies*.

Management

4. **Mats Alvesson**, Professor of Management, Lund University School of Economics and Management, Sweden.
5. **Gerald F. Davis**, Wilbur K. Pierpont Collegiate Professor of Management at the Ross School of Business and Professor of Sociology, The University of Michigan; Editor of *Administrative Science Quarterly* and Director of the Interdisciplinary Committee on Organization Studies (ICOS) at Michigan.
6. **Thomas Dyllick**, Professor of Sustainable Management, University of St. Gallen; University delegate for responsibility and sustainability; past dean of the business school.

7. **Peter McKiernan**, Professor of Strategy, The University of Strathclyde; Fellow of the British Academy of Management; co-founder of *European Management Review*; past President of the British Academy of Management and the European Academy of Management; past Dean of the School of Management and Governance, Murdoch University, Australia.
8. **Katrin Muff,** Professor and past dean of Responsible Leadership and Sustainability, Business School Lausanne, Switzerland.
9. **Anne S. Tsui**, University of Notre Dame, U.S.A.; 67th President, Academy of Management; past Editor of the *Academy of Management Journal*; Founding President, the International Association for China Management Research, Founding Editor-in-Chief of *Management and Organization Review*.

Marketing

10. **Mary Jo Bitner**, Edward M. Carson Chair in Service Marketing, Arizona State University; Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Service Research* (2013-2017); American Marketing Association Board member (2011-2014).
11. **David Reibstein**, William Stewart Woodside Professor of Marketing, Wharton;,past Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Marketing Association; former Executive Director of the Marketing Science Institute.

Operations and Technology Management

12. **Serguei Netessine**, Timken Chaired Professor of Global Technology and Innovation at INSEAD; Department Editor of *Management Science*, senior editor of *Production and Operations Management* (2006-2012); Associate editor of *Operations Research* and *Manufacturing and Service Operations Management*.
13. **Chris Tang,** UCLA Distinguished Professor, and Edward W. Carter Chair in Business Administration, Anderson School of Management, UCLA; past dean of National University of Singapore business school; past President of the Production and Operations Management Society; current editor of *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management*.

To add: Senior scholars in Information Systems, Applied Economics, etc.

Business school dean members (to date):

1. Ingmar Bjorkman, Dean Aalto University School of Business, Finland
2. Hongbin Cai, Dean Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, China
3. Gerry George, Dean Singapore Management University, Singapore
4. Xiongwen Lu, Dean Fudan School of Management, Fudan University, China
5. Ira Solomon, Dean A.B. Freeman School of Business, Tulane University, U.S.A.
6. Xiaobo Wu, Dean School of Management, Zhejiang University, China
7. Bernard Yeung, Dean National University of Singapore Business School, Singapore
8. Sri Zaheer, Dean Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, U.S.A.

To add: Deans from USA, Canada, and South America, etc., and business executive thought leaders

Institutional support members (to date):

1. Dan LeClair, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, AACSB
2. Bill Glick, Chair of AACSB Board, H. Joe Nelson III Professor of Management, Jones School of Business, Rice University
3. Jonas Haertle, Head, PRME Secretariat, UN Global Compact
4. Ulrich Hommel, Professor of Finance, EBS Business School, Germany; Director, Research and Surveys and senior advisor of qualitative services, EFMD
5. Howard Thomas, LKCSB Distinguished Term Professor of Strategic Management, former Dean of Singapore Management University
6. Matthew Wood, Director of Operations, Belgium, EFMD

Appendix A: Bibliography (partial) on the state of management research (red colored are 2016 papers)

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Appendix B: Initiatives to change the status quo (red color items are 2016 new initiatives)

1. Research Excellence Framework. 2011. *Decisions on assessing research impact*. Retrieved from http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-01/

The REF is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. It replaced the **Research Assessment Exercise** (RAE), last conducted in 2008. Beginning 2014, EEF places 25% weight on social or practical impact of the research of UK institutions.

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Also, http://dmm.biologists.org/content/early/2013/05/16/dmm.012955.short

On December 16, 2012, 155 editors and publishers of scholarly journals in a variety of disciplines, mostly in biological sciences, representing 82 organizations worldwide gathered in San Francisco to sign a declaration with specific suggestions for a new framework for assessing research contribution. They declared: Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions. The Declaration offers specific recommendation for funding agencies, institutions, publishers, and organizations that supply metrics. Basically, they are arguing development criteria and methods that put science back into assessing research.

3. Industrial and organizational psychology and management journal Editors pledge to uphold ethics in publications, 2014. www.editorethics.uncc.edu

2011/2012 marked an important year for research and publishing ethics. The world press highlighted numerous data fraud scandals, *Science* published papers and commentaries on the use of coercive citations among journals, and journals faced criticism for engaging in tactics more focused on engorging impact factors than the advancement of science *per se*. At the same time, this period showcased public dialog on the topic of research ethics among major professional associations, and journals featured special issues seeking to define the normative ethical practices of authors, reviewers, and editors. In response to this, a group of Editors from the fields of Industrial/Organizational Psychology and Management assembled to draft a voluntary Code of Conduct defining some general behaviors they agree are important to maintaining the ethics and integrity of scientific inquiry. Since that time the list of signatories has grown to include over 200 Editors and Associate Editors.

4. Academy of Management Journal (http://amj.aom.org) calls for timely research (2014-2016).

The current editor Gerry George (2014-2016 term) called for new research on new topics important in the contemporary era. The topics include climate change and management (June, 2014 issue), aging populations and management (August 2014 issue), organizations with purpose (Oct 2014), rethinking governance and management research (Dec 2014) and grand challenges in management (July 15, 2015 deadline, AMJ website).

5. Strategic Management Journal (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/smj.2016.37.issue-2/issuetoc) calls for repeatable results with emphasis on data accessibility and transparency.

SMJ will lead a major change in the field in terms of supporting replication research to ensure the robustness and reliability of findings (see SMT editorial by Bettis, et al., 2016). Many journals are expected to follow suit. This effort is laudable because reliability is a foundational requirement of responsible science and a necessary condition to societally relevant research. JER, MOR, and OBHDP are also developing policies of replication and data accessibility.

6. Community engaged scholarship at the University of Minnesota (UM) and by Prof. Andy Van de Ven

UM provides a good example of engaging the community in research. This webpage describes the public engagement of research researchers in various disciplines: http://www.engagement.umn.edu. Public engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to advance research, teaching and outreach. Since the publication of his book Engaged Scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007), Professor Andy Van de Ven, a faculty at the Carlson School of Management, U of Minnesota, is a strong advocate of co-production of knowledge with research subjects. See this website for his doctoral course on how to conduct research through engagement with the organizations and individuals being studied: https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/avandeven/course-websites/mgmt-8101-theory-building-and-research-design