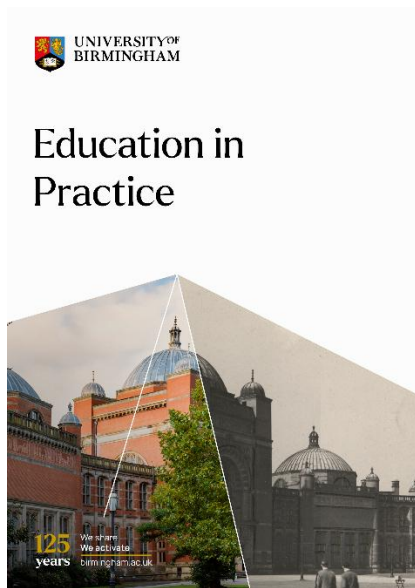




Toral, I. and Jeffrey, H. (2026) 'From inquiry to impact: sustaining the momentum of business education scholarship across transnational campuses', *Education in Practice*, Birmingham Business School Special Issue 2.

ISSN 2057-2069

<https://education-in-practice.co.uk/education-in-practice-birmingham-business-school-special-issue-2-autumn-2026/>

© Inci Toral and Heather Jeffrey



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Education in Practice provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a more equitable global exchange of knowledge.

From inquiry to impact: sustaining the momentum of business education scholarship across transnational campuses

Inci Toral, Department of Marketing, Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham (i.n.toral.1@bham.ac.uk)*

Heather Jeffrey, Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham Dubai (h.jeffrey@bham.ac.uk).

*Corresponding author

There is a profound opportunity to elevate the discourse surrounding business education by positioning Business Education Research and Scholarship (BERS) not merely as an academic pursuit, but as the foundational catalyst for pedagogical innovation and institutional transformation across business schools (Ortalo-Magné, 2025). As the global economic landscape undergoes rapid, volatile shifts, the methodologies employed to cultivate the next generation of strategic leaders must fundamentally adapt. In this editorial we argue about establishing a high-level perspective on the strategic imperative of BERS, exploring how robust scholarship drives creative educational paradigms and outlines the critical ecosystems of institutional support necessary to empower educational researchers within business schools (Stéphanie, 2011).

The Strategic imperative of BERS in contemporary business schools

For decades, business schools have operated under an implicit tension between rigorous theoretical research and high-quality education that leads to employment. BERS serves as the vital conduit that bridges this historic divide, translating empirical investigation into impactful, real-world educational practice (Boronico, 2008). It shifts the focus from simply what we teach to a holistic examination of how we teach and the architectural design of the environments in which learning occurs. In an era defined by geopolitical realignments, digital disruption, and a heightened corporate focus on sustainability and responsible management, static curricula are no longer viable. The modern business ecosystem demands graduates who possess far more than mere technical knowledge; it requires critical thinkers who demonstrate cognitive agility, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural adaptability, namely human skills (Montano and Manson, 2024; Montano and Toral, 2024). BERS provides the intellectual framework needed to systematically evaluate our educational efficacy. By interrogating traditional pedagogical assumptions, BERS empowers academics to

design dynamic learning experiences that mirror the complexities of the global marketplace, ultimately enhancing graduate employability and leadership capacity.

Catalysing innovative educational approaches

The true value of BERS lies in its capacity to foster an institutional culture of continuous experimentation and creative educational design. Rather than relying on anecdotal evidence or legacy practices, scholarship-informed pedagogy allows business schools to pioneer innovative approaches with measurable outcomes (Asarta *et al.*, 2018). Recent scholarship highlights several transformative domains where BERS is actively reshaping the classroom experience:

- **Authentic Assessment Architectures:** Moving beyond traditional, high-stakes summative examinations, research demonstrates that authentic, real-world evaluation methods, such as live business briefs, consultative reports, role plays and portfolio developments, significantly deepen student engagement and professional readiness.
- **Inclusive and Diverse Representation:** BERS encourages a critical re-examination of the narratives embedded within business teaching materials. Integrating diverse case studies, such as portfolios featuring women protagonists and leaders from underrepresented backgrounds, directly enhances a students' sense of belonging, challenges deep-seated industry stereotypes, and builds self-efficacy across diverse student cohorts.
- **Managing Transitional Expectations:** As cohorts become increasingly internationalised and diverse, BERS provides vital insights into the psychological and cultural mismatches between student expectations and academic realities. Scholarly interventions enable institutions to co-create realistic educational expectations, smoothing student transitions and fostering stronger cognitive engagement.

When business schools treat the classroom as a site of rigorous inquiry, teaching ceases to be a passive transmission of facts and becomes a dynamic, evidence-based practice that actively models innovation.

The critical need for structural support systems

Despite its demonstrable impact, educational research within business schools has historically faced systemic marginalisation, frequently mischaracterized as the 'stepchild' to traditional, discipline-specific research (Ortalo-Magné, 2025). Elevating BERS from an isolated, passion-driven activity to a core institutional priority requires intentional, robust, and multifaceted structural support. Educational researchers encounter unique hurdles, balancing intense teaching obligations with the rigorous demands of collecting and analysing pedagogical data. To build a sustainable ecosystem for scholarship, business schools must implement comprehensive support mechanisms:

- Targeted Financial Ecosystems: The provision of dedicated funding is essential to allow faculty to launch exploratory pedagogical projects, pilot innovative classroom technologies, and gather early-stage data.
- Dedicated Space and Time: Writing retreats, structured training modules, and pedagogical workshops offer faculty the mental bandwidth and community collaboration necessary to translate classroom innovations into peer-reviewed, publishable manuscripts.
- Forums for Dissemination: Creating collaborative academic networks, regional tracking initiatives, and dedicated conference proceedings, such as publishing special issues in open-access teaching journals, is vital. These platforms build publishing confidence among early-career scholars and visibly validate pedagogical research.
- Formalised Career Pathways: True institutional commitment is demonstrated when business schools formalise education-focused career tracks and teaching excellence centres, ensuring that high-impact scholarship is directly tied to promotion, parity, and institutional prestige.

When an institution invests in its educational researchers, it directly invests in the quality of its student experience and its long-term academic reputation.

The transnational stakes of BERS

Nowhere is this argument more urgent than within business schools that operate across borders, and the UK sector has particular reason to attend to it now. British universities have expanded their transnational offer substantially over recent decades, delivering degrees through branch campuses, franchise partnerships, and validated programmes across the Gulf, Asia, and beyond. Transnational higher education involves "the movement of people, knowledge, programs, providers, ideas, curricula, projects, research and services across national or regional jurisdictional borders" (Knight, 2007, p. 24), yet much of the contemporary expansion has treated "education as a product which can be packaged and sold abroad" (Branch, 2018). Many of these arrangements were built quickly, driven by the promise of new revenue streams and global reputation, with less attention paid to whether the educational relationship itself was sound (Wihlborg and Robson, 2018).

Many international campuses, wherever they originate, were established primarily to teach, generating revenue through student recruitment and delivery instead of discovery, and often without a parallel research culture in place to test their own educational choices (Berheide *et al.*, 2020). This teaching-first orientation is not, in itself, a problem. It becomes one when the curriculum being taught, and the assumptions embedded within it, are simply carried over from the home campus with no scrutiny of whether they hold up elsewhere. For UK institutions this risk is acute: a franchise model can quietly reproduce British curricula, case studies, and pedagogical

norms as the default standard against which every branch campus is measured, with local staff positioned to deliver, not to shape, what is delivered.

A curriculum built for one setting rarely travels cleanly to another. Course content shaped around the values and assumptions of a home campus can miss the mark for students elsewhere, and even well-intentioned educators have learned this through experience: a case study or example chosen without local knowledge can cause confusion, or worse, offence, instead of the engagement it was meant to spark. Scientometric work on the field identifies precisely these difficulties, pointing to intercultural transitions, the symbolic power of Western higher education, and the potential for cross-cultural ignorance in teaching and learning practices between partners (Dai, Mok and Li, 2023). What resolves this is not caution alone, but sustained enquiry into who students are and what they bring with them, an iterative process built with local staff and students, not handed down from a distant home campus.

This is where the UK context sharpens the stakes further. Relationships between a home campus and its overseas partners have historically run in one direction, with knowledge, quality assurance, and academic authority flowing outward from the UK institution and compliance flowing back. Left unexamined, this pattern does more than limit educational quality; it reproduces the very colonial dynamic that transnational education claims to have moved beyond, privileging certain forms of knowledge and marginalising others along lines of race, ethnicity, and geopolitical location (Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo, 2020), and risking what Santos (2014) terms epistemicide, the destruction of alternative ways of knowing. BERS offers a corrective. Sustained investment in scholarship at every campus, not only the home campus, builds the local research capacity and voice needed to make these partnerships genuinely reciprocal, so that what is taught, and how, is shaped as much by branch campuses as by the institutions that hold the accreditation or the history.

For UK business schools in particular, taking this seriously changes what a transnational partnership is for. It is no longer enough to ask whether an overseas campus can deliver a UK-accredited programme to a satisfactory standard. The more pressing question is whether staff and students on that campus have a genuine say in what is taught, whether local scholarship is resourced and recognised on the same terms as scholarship at home, and whether the relationship is built to evolve, not simply to replicate. Without that shift, UK institutions risk expanding their global footprint while quietly exporting a colonial model of education in new packaging. With it, BERS becomes not an add-on to transnational strategy, but the condition on which any claim to genuine partnership depends.

Concluding thoughts: a unified vision for business education

As we introduce this special issue, we invite readers to look beyond individual classroom case studies and view these contributions as part of a collective, strategic effort to redefine the future of management education. The insights contained within

these pages demonstrate the profound impact that occurs when faculty are supported to think deeply, research rigorously, and innovate boldly.

By championing BERS, business schools can move away from transactional, compliance-driven models of higher education and move toward a transformative paradigm that nurtures authentic, critical, and responsible global leaders. The responsibility rests upon institutional leaders, guest editors, reviewers, and faculty alike to continue advocating for the resources, recognition, and structural support that this vital scholarship deserves.

References

- Asarta, C. J., Bento, R., Fornaciari, C. J., Lund Dean, K., Arbaugh, J. B. (Ben), and Hwang, A. (2018). The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Changing the Dominant Narrative About (and In) Research Institutions. *Journal of Management Education*, 42(6), 731–748. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562918777271>
- Berheide, C. W., Watanabe, M., Falci, C., Borland, E., Bates, D. C., and Anderson-Hanley, C. (2020). Gender, type of higher education institution, and faculty work-life integration in the United States. *Community, Work & Family*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2020.1776220>
- Boronico, J. (2008). The Challenges of Contemporary Business Education. *Journal of Hospital Marketing & Public Relations*, 18(2), 221–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15390940802234289>
- Branch, J. (2018). Transnational education: Trend, modes of practices and development. In *Higher education and the global marketplace: A practical guide to sustaining quality*. Springer
- Dai, K., Mok, K. H., and Li, X. (2023). Mapping the historical development and landscape of research about transnational higher education: A scientometric analysis from comparative and international perspectives. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 1–20
- Kessi, S., Marks, Z., and Ramugondo, E. (2020). Decolonizing African Studies. *Critical African Studies*, 12(3), 271–282.
- Knight, J. (2007). Cross-border tertiary education: an introduction. In S. Vincent-Lancrin (ed.), *Cross-border Tertiary Education: A Way Towards Capacity Development*. OECD and World Bank, Paris, pp. 21–46
- Montano, S. and Toral Manson, I. 2024, 'Responsible marketing and consumption starts with changing mindsets: how educators can embed responsible marketing and consumption into curricula', in M. Saren, L.M. Hassan, M. McGowan, N.C. Smith, E. Surman and R. Varman (eds), *Responsible marketing for well-being and society: a research companion*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 84–100.

Montano, S. and Toral, I. 2024, Professor Sarah Montano and Dr Inci Toral—written evidence (ACT0010) to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee inquiry: Scaling up: AI and creative technology, UK Parliament, London.

Ortalo-Magné, F. (2025). Sustaining Excellence in Business Education (pp. 192–205). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003533269-21>

Santos, B. de S. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO

Stéphanie, D. (2011). Redesigning Management Education and Research. Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857933591>

Wihlborg, M., and Robson, S. (2018). Internationalisation of higher education: drivers, rationales, priorities, values and impacts. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 8–18.