

Special Dedication

*To Pierre Louis DUBOIS who originally came up
with the idea for BSIS.*

*To Gordon SHENTON, with whom I had the pleasure
of working to give BSIS its international dimension.*

Michel Kalika, *BSIS founder & former director*

BSIS: a detector, generator and accelerator of business school impact

The purpose of the book is to take stock of the impact of the Business School Impact System (BSIS) ten years after its creation.

Originally based on the idea of Pierre Louis Dubois, BSIS was initially created by the FNEGE¹ for French business schools, then was adopted thanks to the support and enthusiasm of Eric Cornuel at the EFMD. The system was subsequently given an extra international dimension thanks to the expertise and experience of Gordon Shenton, one of the founders of EQUIS.

The idea for this book should be attributed to the former president of St. Gallen, Thomas Bieger, who said to me during a recent visit that he considered BSIS to be “a true success story”! However, beyond the simple success story, we also thought that it would be useful for the international business school community to highlight the concrete added value BSIS has offered for those institutions² that have been involved in it over the years. With this objective in mind, it occurred to me to ask schools how BSIS has been useful for them, and in what way it has contributed to their awareness of impact and to their development. We were delighted that 38 business schools accepted to answer our request within the very short timeframe we gave them. In the same way, it was also natural for us to ask for feedback about BSIS from the experts who have been part of the development of the system, and who had a broad experience of other quality assurance certification systems. In total, 18 experts answered positively to our call for contributions. Thanks to their added experience as business school deans, they provided us with an invaluable two-sided perspective on the impact of BSIS on institutions. Finally, a number of EFMD and FNEGE BSIS actors were also involved in helping us to put this book together.

Initially designed to convince the local stakeholders of business schools of the latter’s impact on their territory, referred to as the ‘impact zone’ (ST. GALLEN³, p. 138), BSIS has developed into a process that generates more than just external communication impact (CEIBS, p. 49).

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1. FNEGE (French Foundation for Business & Management Studies): <https://www.fnege.org/>
 2. Although we use the term business school, BSIS visits have also been conducted in universities.
 3. When referencing business school’s input to our content, the names of schools are written in capital letters, and the page number indicates where a testimony has been provided elsewhere in the book.

From a tool that measures impact, BSIS has indeed become a process that generates impact in itself.

This section of the book will introduce the reader to BSIS (Part I), its seven dimensions (II), the seven questions we ask prior to an impact assessment process (III), the numerous and wide-ranging impacts of BSIS (IV), and finally the most common recommendations formulated to the deans of schools following a BSIS visit (V).

1. BSIS, AN IMPACT COMMUNICATION TOOL

BSIS was the first-ever system that proposed to consider the impact of a business school from a global perspective. The question of the impact of research has been on the table for quite some time, but the important contribution of BSIS to the academic community has been to consider the impact of the school on the impact zone(s) through seven distinct dimensions, and around more than one hundred indicators. These seven dimensions of impact resulted from an initial survey carried out on 25 actors in the business school sector.

1.1. A tool for business schools

BSIS as a process fundamentally aims to help a business school to **better measure its impact and communicate the results of this to stakeholders**. Based on over 10 years of experience, we are able to identify four different groups of business schools that choose to go through the BSIS process, each one with very specific objectives.

1. Schools not yet accredited, but wanting to demonstrate their impact to local stakeholders;
2. Schools thinking about pursuing accreditations, and for whom BSIS was seen as a learning process (GRENOBLE IAE, p. 72);
3. Schools involved in accreditations and looking for a better demonstration of their impact towards accreditation bodies. In this way, BSIS became an integral part of their accreditation journey (TALTECH, p. 130);
4. Triple crown internationally recognized schools that wanted to convince local or national stakeholders that their heavy investment in research and internationalization makes a positive contribution to the companies located in their territorial ecosystems (IMD, p. 95).

1.2. The BSIS process involves three-steps:

1. The first is the **collection of data** by the school and the preparation of a pre-visit report. The school is asked to define its scope and its impact zone(s). The scope includes all those organisations that wouldn't exist without the school, even if they are legally independent. Sometimes the scope studied includes two different institutions working together (UPBE, p. 140). The impact zone (CORVINUS, p. 53) depends on the strategy and also on the stakeholders that the school wishes to convince about its impact. According to the seven dimensions of impact, it is possible to identify and distinguish several different impact zones. Moreover, for multi-campus business schools, the definition of the scopes and of the impact zones is adapted to the realities of each campus (SKEMA, p. 125). The data taken into consideration are both quantitative and qualitative (SOBEY, p. 128). In terms of impact, narrative cases are often very convincing (NOTTINGHAM BS, p. 105). Finally, the preparation of the visit in itself plays the role of a useful introspection opportunity (SDMIMD, p. 123).
2. The second step involves the **visit of two experts**. We use the term 'expert' (generally former deans) rather than that of 'auditor' deliberately, because the BSIS process does not serve to check or control. It is there to help and support business schools. The questions and the discussions during the visit obviously have an impact on the school (HEC Lausanne, p. 74).
3. The third step is the delivery of the **experts' impact report** one month after receiving the additional information requested during the visit. The report is confidential and the communication is managed by the school with the support of EFMD & FNEGE, if required. Since the beginning, our policy has been to refuse to communicate the results of reports to journalists in order to avoid ranking initiatives based on non-comparable data. We indeed consider that it makes no sense to compare the impact of business schools with different scopes and distinctive impact zone(s). The report is composed of two parts. One focuses on the assessment of the impact observed by the experts, the second on recommendations to increase impact (AUC, p. 133). Some recommendations might focus on the development of the communication around existing impact that have been ignored or underestimated; other recommendations might suggest how to develop new impact considering the competencies and the resources available to the school. After the visit, the school is awarded the BSIS Label for three years as a testimony of the engagement of the school in generating impact.
4. We could also add a fourth phase involving the communication of the results, and which falls under the responsibility of the school.

EFMD-FNEGE make a communication kit available to all participants, and offer schools suggestions from their media support services. However, it is ultimately the school that manages the feedback to its stakeholders. The fact that BSIS is an impact process also means that the visit by the experts is in no way the final step. On the contrary, it is just one part of the overall system.

1.3. Main characteristic of BSIS

The distinctive features of BSIS are as follows.

- The BSIS 'mindset' is probably one of its most distinctive traits. In the BSIS process, no standard is checked, and no boxes are ticked ("meets", "below", "above standard"). We always insist upon the fact that the BSIS experts have a positive state of mind, that they are not there to underline weaknesses but to help the school to better understand its impact and to formulate recommendations to improve it. In a certain sense, BSIS is closer to a consulting process. It is for this reason that I insist on telling participants that the BSIS process should not generate any negative stress. Compared to other types of processes that can be very stressful for staff working in schools, we are convinced that a positive atmosphere between staff and the experts is a key success factor for the successful demonstration of impact;
- The flexibility of the BSIS process is a key factor, since the impact assessment needs to be adapted to the scope and the context of the school. For example, it may occur that the school mentions a kind of impact we hadn't previously identified. Moreover, BSIS involves a methodology that is embedded in the reality of the school, and as such one that takes carefully into account the specific nature of the context (Y SCHOOLS, p. 148)...
- The duration of the BSIS process. The inherent flexibility of the system also concerns the length of the process, which will ultimately depend on the school, the availability of the project manager and the accessibility of data. The process varies in duration from three months to one year;
- The time horizon of the impact identified. Impact can be short term (a year for financial impact), middle term (three years for intellectual impact) or long term (educational impact on alumni, creation of companies, etc.). BSIS is interesting in that it distinguishes between immediate short-term impacts and delayed impacts (e.g., business creation).

2. THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF BSIS

Since our intention is for impact to be measured globally and holistically, we look at seven different yet interrelated dimensions of impact, whereby some impacts can be found in more than one dimension. There is no ranking of importance between the seven dimensions.

1. **Financial impact** concerns expenditure by the school (direct impact) or by the students and other actors (indirect impact) in the impact zone.
2. **Educational impact** covers the impact generated by students in the impact zone (% of students coming to the impact zone and who stay thanks to the school), and the student attraction impact (% of students coming from outside the impact zone) both at national and international levels. The impact of executive education and alumni is also taken into consideration. The number of alumni present in the governing bodies of companies or in the government is also noted.
3. **Business development impact** takes into consideration the impact of the resources of the school (internships, short business assignments, apprenticeships, consulting work, etc.) on the companies and the economy. It also looks at the entrepreneurial impact of the school through the creation of start-ups by students, faculty and alumni.
4. **Intellectual impact** concerns traditional academic impact (publications) but also, and of increasing importance, **the managerial and societal impact of research**. Today, it is recognized that publishing in highly ranked international journals is not sufficient: management research also has to be disseminated, and to be useful to business and public organisations or authorities. Moreover, intellectual impact highlights the regional impact on organisations within the impact zone(s).
5. The **ecosystem impact** is very often ignored. It results from the set of interrelations between the school and the entities of the impact zone, such as: professional organisations, NGOs, public authorities, other educational organisations and companies. A map of the ecosystem can identify who the main actors are, and the nature of their interactions with the school. To capture the ecosystem impact, we try to answer 'what would happen in the impact zone if the school disappears, if it declines or if it develops?'
6. **Societal impact** covers what we generally call CSR or ERS in educational programmes, in research, in the activities of the school and of the student clubs and societies (IBSS, p. 90). This impact is increasingly associated with the UN SDGs (EM Lyon, p. 59).

7. **Image impact** focuses on the contribution of the school to the attraction of the impact zone, to the image of the town, of the region, or the country in which it is located. The idea is here to capture the influence of the school on its territories.

3. THE SEVEN QUESTIONS ASKED PRIOR TO THE BSIS PROCESS⁴

Before going through a BSIS process, it is initially necessary to clarify the answers provided by the business school to the following questions:

1. **Why** measure impact (EMLV, p. 57)? Why go through an impact assessment process that will be costly in terms of human resources and fees?
2. **Who** are the stakeholders the school wants to convince of its impact? Are they local, or national stakeholders, or accreditations bodies, or the rating agencies?
3. Impact of **What**? What are the activities for which the business school wants to demonstrate its impact: Teaching? Research? Entrepreneurial projects? Student clubs and societies? ...etc.
4. Impact **Where**? Defining the geographical limits of the impact zone is tricky and interlinked with the identification of the stakeholders. As a consequence, the impact zone can also vary according to the impact dimension or the specific activity of the school (GOODMAN, p. 70). This question is particularly relevant for multi-campus schools or for schools that have opened a new campus (ESSCA, p. 61).
5. Impact on **Whom & on What**? Is it the impact on people (students, executive education participants), on organisations (private & public) and their managerial practices, or society facing SDG challenges?
6. Impact **When**? Impact during the course of the previous year, the 3 or 5 last years, or delayed impact?
7. Impact measured by **Whom**? An institution can measure its impact on its own. One of the added values of BSIS is that the impact report is produced by two respected institutions, namely EFMD & FNEGE, and that are external to the school (Peel, p. 109).

4. Kalika, M., Shenton, G. (2021) "Measuring business impact: the lessons from the business schools", *Corporate Governance*, Volume 21 Issue 2.

4. THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF BSIS

Based on personal accounts of business school actors, we have identified a non-exhaustive list of the key positive impacts of BSIS encountered in participating institutions. Some of these influences have a more general nature, while others are limited to the school's impact zone(s) or ecosystem(s).

– **Awareness of the business school industry about impact.**

Even if as academics we must remain humble and modest concerning the role of BSIS in the global development of the management studies sector within higher education, we have to say that BSIS and the activities it generates (articles⁵, symposiums, webinars, blogs, COVID-19 impact surveys) have contributed to the increasing awareness of impact within the sector. Created in 2012, it was the first-ever global methodology to measure the wider impact of a school. AACSB had already published a report in 2008 on the impact of research, but the creation of BSIS preceded the integration of impact as one of the main pillars of the American accreditation, as well as the creation of AMBA's BGA accreditation based on impact. The recent book by Haley⁶ (2022) mentions the growth of "impact" in management publications (FVG EAESP, p. 66);

– **Impact on mission, vision and strategy.**

Because, the process is open and positive minded, discussions with the dean of the school are frank, without the risks of an accreditation process. And when we talk about impact, the question of the scope of the school, of its target audiences, of the impact zone(s), and of the stakeholders come very often rapidly to the table. Discussions around impact inevitably lead to conversations about strategic issues. An expert with a very broad accreditation experience told me at the end of a BSIS visit that he had never seen such a transparent strategic discussion with a dean in an accreditation process. This is why impact assessment generates impact-driven strategy (RSM, p. 111) and this assessment goes well beyond the measurement of impact (HEC LIEGE, p. 77). It is also seen as reinforcing the alignment with the mission (MONTPELLIER BS, p. 102);

– **Impact on funding:**

Some schools use BSIS to add strength to their request for subsidies either for their operations or for investment in new buildings, arguing the financial impact on their different impact zones, in particular when they have campuses located in different regions (NEOMA, p. 103);

5. See appendices.

6. Haley, Usha C.V., *Impact and the management researcher*, Routledge, 2022.

- **Impact on the organisation of business schools:** If impact is important for the school, it should be made visible in their organisation chart. SASIN (p. 114) in Bangkok was the first business school to nominate a “Chief Impact Officer”. KU (p. 101) in Poland created a position for “Rector Advisor for Impact”. This is an easy way to show internally that impact is a key issue, since these positions report directly to the dean or the president;
- **Impact on Information Systems:** the impact assessment process requires data, and quite often the available data are internal and do not concern the contribution of the school to its environment. Quite often, questions like “how many students, professors, alumni have created start-ups or companies” or “what research has been done in connection with local companies” reveal a lack of data collection concerning the external aspects of the school. This then leads the school to think about introducing an Impact Information System, and the creation of an impact dashboard. Impact assessment generates a culture of measurement of the results of activities (WHU, p. 146);
- **Impact on the culture of schools:** this impact, which was for the founder an unexpected type of impact, has been reported by schools quite often in different ways (IAELYON, p. 81). Firstly, the fact that the impact assessment process creates a feeling of pride shared throughout the institution was one of the first unexpected outcomes of the BSIS process. Indeed, for a number of years now, the focus on academic research and publications has created a feeling of non-recognition for those staff who are not seen in the same light as the “stars” publishing articles in A-ranked journals! On the contrary, the global approach of BSIS means that all the internal actors in a school are considered to make an important contribution to impact, and about which they should feel proud. People inside the school consider it to be a privilege to give back to the country (SEB LJUBJANA, p. 116). A second impact of BSIS is related to the creation of a culture of impact within the school, because the term “impact” resonates with everybody and encourages the creation of an impact mindset (EXCELIA, p. 65);
- **Change Impact:** A major issue for business schools concerns how to adapt to the changes in their environment, to anticipate change where possible, and to roll out change. We all know that it is far from easy to drive change in organisations, and particularly in academic institutions. The development of impact awareness as well as the recommendations by an external body to generate more impact can support the management of those change processes (BEDFORDSHIRE, p. 137);
- **Impact on the dissemination of research results:** By highlighting the different dimensions of research impact, that is to say

traditional academic impact (impact factors, H index...), managerial/societal impact and regional/geographical impact, by asking the appropriate questions about these different dimensions, and by formulating recommendations related to this, more and more business schools communicate actively on the relevance of their research for society (UPF, p. 143);

- **Impact wording.** For many people inside schools, impact was a “portmanteau” word. Involvement in, and internal communication around the BSIS process and its results develop awareness of impact, and enable the school community to better distinguish between “inputs”, “actions”, “outputs”, “outcomes” and “impact”, which leads to changes in behaviour, in decisions, etc (BIMTECH, p. 47);
- **Impact measurement.** One of the merits of an assessment process is the opportunity to quantify impact that is known to exist, but has never actually been measured (ESSEC, p. 63). It also supports the transformation of the implicit to the explicit (SDA BOCCONI, p. 120);
- **Impact on the image of the institution.** After undergoing the BSIS process, deans told us that the way their school is perceived changed, both externally from the point of view of stakeholders, but also internally within the university for example (IAE METZ, p. 85; IAE NICE, p. 87);

5. THE MOST COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FORMULATED BY BSIS EXPERTS

The recommendations formulated by our experts only cover the impact of the school itself. They never focus on points that are unrelated to the impact of the institution. Recommendations should be seen as suggestions, and are in no way mandatory. It is always up to the school's senior leadership team to decide upon the relevance and the feasibility of any suggestions made. The experts' suggestions are ranked by order of strategic importance and can be divided in two categories, namely: recommendations for communication on existing impact, and recommendations concerning the creation of new impact based on the resources and the competencies of the school. In the annual follow-up process, the school is asked to indicate which recommendations have been implemented. It goes without saying that the recommendations are contingent on the context of the school, but it is possible to identify commonly recurring suggestions as examples. On average, the BSIS experts will formulate between 20 to 30 recommendations for each school.

- Recommendations concerning the positioning of schools;

- Better specify the definition of the different impact zones depending on the types of impact,
 - Adapt the name and the branding of the school to clarify it in terms of impact,
 - Identify the main stakeholders to convince them about the impact of the school,
 - More systematically distinguish between input, action, output, outcome and impact,
 - Create an impact information system with dashboard impact indicators.
- Recommendations concerning financial impact;
 - Avoid under-estimation of direct and indirect impact (frequent in the case of university business schools),
 - Consider the school's different scopes when measuring financial impact:
 - * Legal scope: the school's budget,
 - * Consolidated scope: include the budget of the independent organisations or activities that wouldn't exist without the business school (foundations, student & alumni associations, research projects, incubators, etc.) in proportion to the contribution of the school⁷,
 - * Wider scope: include the impact of the start-ups & companies created by students, alumni, or faculty.
 - Recommendations concerning educational impact;
 - Develop programmes aligned with the core competencies of the school,
 - Develop executive education programmes, including DBAs, that generate academic and managerial impact and develop corporate links.
 - Recommendations concerning business development impact;
 - Improve the tracking of internships and short business assignments to facilitate the measurement of their impact,
 - Organise and structure the tracking of the entrepreneurial activities of students & alumni.
 - Recommendations concerning intellectual impact;
 - Distinguish clearly between the academic, managerial, regional, and societal impact of research,

7. In the same way as a consolidation process.

- Produce a research impact report that highlights the usefulness and the value of research for businesses, organisations, etc.,
- Encourage faculty to disseminate the results of their work through the stakeholder and alumni networks.
- Recommendations concerning ecosystem impact;
 - Draw a map of the business school ecosystem identifying the main actors and the relationship they have with the school.
- Recommendations concerning societal impact;
 - Measure the impact of the actions carried out in the field of CSR/ERS,
 - Investigate the delayed impact of the teaching of CSR/ESR on alumni through case studies and surveys.
- Recommendations concerning the impact on image.
 - Publish a report focusing on the impact of the school,
 - Create a section on the institutional website indicating the impact of the school,
 - Ask the town or the region to contribute to financing the communication and promotion of the school. Each time a school communicates, it benefits the image of these entities.

This book has been organised into three parts. The first part covers the contributions of EFMD and FNEGE. Part two looks more closely at business school contributions, and part three at those of the BSIS experts.

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8. [https://cvip.sphinxonline.net/report/\(T\(4ks63rajdr\)\)/r.aspx](https://cvip.sphinxonline.net/report/(T(4ks63rajdr))/r.aspx)