



Academia-Industry Collaboration for Bridging the Research-Practice Gap in Nepalese Business Schools

Gaurav Ojha

Faculty Member of Business Research, Mid-Valley International College, HELP University, Malaysia

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Email

ojhagaurav84@gmail.com

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Abstract

Purpose: This study develops and examines a conceptual framework for academia–industry collaboration (AIC) to bridge the research–practice gap (BRPG) in Nepalese business schools.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 257 faculty members from 43 business schools affiliated with national and international institutions across four provinces of Nepal. Multiple regression and mediation analyses were employed to examine the proposed relationships.

Findings: Evidence-based management and stakeholder engagement significantly and positively influence BRPG. Methodological rigor and research translation show positive but statistically insignificant direct effects. Academia–industry collaboration significantly mediates the relationships between all four antecedents and BRPG.

Implications: The findings highlight the importance of strengthening academia–industry collaboration to enhance the practical relevance, knowledge transfer, and societal impact of business research in Nepal.

Originality/Value: This study proposes and empirically validates a framework explaining how academia–industry collaboration bridges the research–practice gap in Nepalese business schools, contributing new evidence from a developing-country context.

Keywords: academia–industry collaboration, research–practice gap, evidence-based management, stakeholder engagement, Nepalese business schools

Introduction

In the context of management sciences and business education in Nepal, research orientations, knowledge production and sharing mechanisms, along with findings derived from research activities at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, have been both critically and constructively evaluated for their limited engagement with business, managerial,

and industry practices (Timming & Macneil, 2023; Pokharel & Pathak, 2023; Lamichhane, 2024; Ojha, 2025). Despite their vital role as a link between academic business research and organizational practices, business schools in Nepal lack robust networks, effective communicational channels, and interactive strategies for overcoming the ongoing gap between academically oriented business



research and its actual implementation in business operations and organizational realities (Bansal et al., 2012; Negt & Haunschild, 2025; Ojha, 2025). The underutilization of research findings generated by business schools in industries, businesses, enterprises, and entrepreneurial ventures reflects a crisis of research relevance within business studies and management education in Nepal (Kieser & Leiner, 2009).

After all, so much of the research produced in business schools remains focused on theoretical exploration or replicating international analytical models with limited consideration for emerging issues and challenges within the local business environment in Nepal (Pittz, 2024; Ojha, 2025). As a result, industries and businesses in Nepal perceive academic outputs as abstract and detached from the realities of managing organizations with unique challenges in a developing economy characterized by resource constraints, informal structures, unstable socio-political contexts, global competitors, and inconsistent market dynamics (Wickert et al., 2021; Negt & Haunschild, 2025).

In addition, despite voluminous business research production, there is a lack of structured policy- and practice-driven collaborative strategies for knowledge exchange and collaboration between academia and industry for overcoming the research-practice gap in the context of management education in Nepal (Ahmed et al., 2022; Lamichhane, 2024; Paauwe & Van De Voorde, 2025). Hence, addressing the issue of research-practice gaps through academia-industry collaboration is critical for business schools to contribute to emerging business practices, expand the industrial sector, and nurture the buzzing start-up/entrepreneurship ecosystem in Nepal.

A key function of business and management scholarship is to generate theory and evidence-based insights that improve decision-making and outcomes for organizational stakeholders (Barends & Rousseau, 2018). While academia operates under a publish-or-perish culture with a reliance on

self-referential research, the business and industrial sectors struggle for business research that provides foundations for their strategic planning and decision-making (Briner et al., 2009). Industry practitioners also have perceptions that academic work is overly theory-oriented and disconnected from the operational realities of businesses and industries (Negt & Haunschild, 2025). Due to research-practice gaps Nepalese business schools are finding it difficult to demonstrate the societal, industry, business, entrepreneurial, and policy impact of their research outcomes in relevant organizational contexts (Shapiro et al., 2007). Hence, academia-industry collaboration has become rather fundamental for overcoming the research-practice gap in Nepali business schools (Norn & Ramos-Vielba, 2025).

Moreover, bridging the research-practice divide requires business schools to engage with business practitioners through experiential learning, and co-create research protocols for specific organizational challenges (Lau et al., 2025; Paauwe & Van De Voorde, 2025). With sustainable pathways for contextually relevant and practically applicable research, academia-industry collaboration enables business schools to function as necessary institutions within the business, corporate, innovation, and entrepreneurship ecosystems in Nepal (Bansal et al., 2012; Kunwar and Ulak, 2023).

Despite sufficient and substantial international literature on academia-industry collaborations and research-practice gap in business education and existing studies in the Nepalese context have remained limited to collaboration possibilities and educational partnerships (Negt & Haunschild, 2025; Lau et al., 2025). Pokharel and Pathak (2023) in a study found that students, faculty members, and industry executives agree university-industry collaboration is possible with joint research, professional development, networking, and student placements. When it comes to academia-industry collaborations, rather than bridging the research-

practice gap, the primary focus of universities and their affiliated business schools in Nepal has been limited to industry collaboration objectives based on syllabus modules, case analysis, internship programs, and employability issues. (Barends & Rousseau, 2018; Ojha, 2025; Lau et al., 2025).

Similarly, Ojha (2025) has identified self-referential academic practices, weak corporate networks, and communication barriers as contributors to the research–practice gap in Nepalese business schools. However, there is no study that has empirically examined the combined influence of methodology and research design, research translation and transformation, evidence-based management, and stakeholder engagement within a single conceptual framework as antecedents necessary for academic–industry collaborations that can minimize the research–practice gap in business schools (Norn & Ramos-Vielba, 2025; Negt & Haunschild, 2025).

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in stakeholder theory (Banks et al., 2016), supplemented by perspectives from evidence-based management (Briner et al., 2009) and knowledge transfer and production theories (Shapiro et al., 2007).

Bridging the research–practice gap has become a strategic priority for higher education institutions, particularly business schools, where research is expected to contribute to evidence-based decision-making and socio-economic development. In Nepal, the growing emphasis on quality assurance and accreditation has reinforced the need for research that is academically rigorous, practically relevant, and responsive to stakeholder needs (Mishra & Jha, 2023). The digital transformation of academic operations has further created opportunities for stronger collaboration between universities and industry through technology-enabled knowledge creation and dissemination (Mishra, 2023). Moreover, recent advances in artificial intelligence have

highlighted the importance of collaborative knowledge management, research translation, and learning systems that effectively preserve, transfer, and apply knowledge across academic and industrial settings (Ananda et al., 2025a). AI-driven educational transformation also requires closer partnerships between higher education institutions and industry to align research, innovation, and workforce development with emerging societal and technological demands (Ananda et al., 2025b). Furthermore, persistent challenges in examination management and higher education governance in Nepal demonstrate the need for stronger institutional collaboration, evidence-based practices, and stakeholder engagement to improve academic quality and practical outcomes (Karn et al., 2026; Gautam et al., 2025). Despite these developments, limited empirical evidence explains how academia–industry collaboration can bridge the research–practice gap in Nepalese business schools. Therefore, this study develops and empirically examines a conceptual framework that identifies the collaborative antecedents necessary to enhance the scholarly impact, practical relevance, and societal contribution of business research in Nepal.

Research Objective

Drawing on the perspectives of methodological rigor and research design, research translation and transformation, evidence-based management, and stakeholder engagement as key antecedents of academia–industry collaboration, this study develops a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding how business schools can collaborate effectively with industry partners to generate academically rigorous and practically relevant research. Specifically, the study aims to formulate and empirically examine a conceptual framework of academia–industry collaboration that enhances the scholarly impact and practical relevance of business research while identifying the collaborative antecedents that contribute to bridging the research–practice gap in Nepalese business schools.

Literature Review

Through academia-industry collaboration, this study examines several inputs, drivers, and enabling variables that can be used to close research-practice gaps that still exist in Nepalese business schools (Pokharel & Pathak, 2023; Lamichhane, 2024; Ojha, 2025). In this study, the stakeholder theory developed by Banks et al. (2016) serves as the theoretical foundation for the conceptualization of this research.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, stakeholder theory provides a framework to examine the research–practice gap in Nepalese business schools by suggesting the multiple actors such as industry partners, faculty and professional associations and their interests need to intersect with knowledge creation and application protocols of business schools in Nepal. Banks et al. (2016) emphasize that effective stakeholder engagement requires recognizing diverse expectations, negotiating values, and building collaborative processes that sustain mutual benefit. In the context of academia–industry collaboration, a shift from linear transfer of knowledge from business schools is necessary for a dialogical relationship where each stakeholder contributes expertise, contextual insight, and resources (Banks et al., 2016). Stakeholder theory suggests that bridging the research–practice gap requires collaboration among relevant actors throughout the research life cycle, which includes jointly identifying research problems, designing studies, interpreting findings, and implementing solutions that address real-world business challenges.

Another useful lens for understanding challenges associated with academia-industry collaborations for bridging research-practice gap has been indicated by Shapiro et al. (2007), with the distinction between knowledge transfer and knowledge production. According to this model, the knowledge transfer challenge underlines issues associated with communication, translation, and

dissemination that obstruct research insights generated in business schools from reaching practitioners in their professional context. Similarly, production challenges emphasize methodological rigor, generalizability, and theoretical contribution, which sidelines case-specific, action-oriented, context-sensitive, problem-driven research in business schools (Shapiro et al., 2007).

Empirical Review

Regarding empirical studies, Rynes et al. (2002), in their study, demonstrate that there are significant gaps between research findings generated in business schools and what managers believe to be true, relevant, and pragmatic. Apparently, disseminating actionable insights from rigorous academic research related to management studies to its practitioners and line managers has been a challenge that has prevented key academic findings from being applied in business practice.

Similarly, Bansal et al. (2012) argue that business research fails to connect with the realities of practice, and this problem remains especially visible in the context of Nepalese business schools. While academic research remains theoretical, method-driven, and fitted to supervisors, external evaluators, and scholarly audiences, the evidential needs of industry for practical solutions, market-driven insights, and adaptable strategies are grossly overlooked in business research conducted within academic settings (Bansal et al., 2012). In their study, Lau et al. (2025) have also analyzed the persistent research–practice gap in human resource management with the conceptualization of hybrid professional identities that operate between academia and practice. This study has conceptualized three distinct roles, such as impact-driven scholar, reflective practitioner, and pracademic, as potential bridges that integrate theoretical rigor with practical relevance (Lau et al., 2025).

Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2022) have discussed the difference between the two academic

and industry orientations, which negatively impacts their working together as a coherent unit. This study has proposed the Academia-Industry Collaboration Plan (AICP) design model that comprises processes, methods, or approaches, and tools for collaborations that potentially enable business schools to bridge research-practice gaps. Likewise, Arshed et al. (2022) have recognized that academia-industry collaboration enriches innovation in both universities and industry domain, which significantly contributes towards economic development of the nation, and this study has suggested learning models like organizational and transformational learning are necessary for academia-industry collaborations.

Critically, Negt and Haunschild (2025), in their study, argue against the notion of the research–practice gap as a mere communication problem. Likewise, concerns for collaboration between researchers and practitioners within business studies and management education, despite thick discussions and enormous concerns, lack operational detail on how such collaboration can become sustained within existing institutional pressures (Negt & Haunschild, 2025; Paauwe & Van De Voorde, 2025). Thus, bridging the gap requires rethinking how research policies, protocols, and procedures are set with institutional mechanisms that recognize rigor, relevance, and hybrid forms of knowledge transfer and production.

In a Nepalese research context, although Pokharel and Pathak (2023) found that students, instructors, and industry leaders in Nepal agree on the attainability of university–industry collaboration (UIC) through objectives such as joint research, supervision, professional development, and networking, this study doesn't examine how these perceived objectives are operationalized in practice. Besides, the absence of significant differences among stakeholders suggests that the discussion of university–industry collaboration remains at a conceptual rather than an actionable

level, and this study doesn't provide research-specific mechanisms to bridge the gap between academic research and industry application.

Similarly, Kunwar and Ulak (2023) emphasize practical exposure through field visits, internships, and industry-aligned learning experiences for sustainable and supportive academia-industry collaboration. Likewise, Lamichhane (2024), in an article on scientific research and corporate mindset, indicates that both domestic and international corporate stakeholders of business studies and management education demonstrate a lack of understanding regarding the research process. Besides, there is a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature and purpose of research between academia and industry (Lamichhane, 2024).

Furthermore, Ojha (2025) found that different variables are associated with the research-practice gap in Nepalese business schools, which includes self-referential practices, subjective norms, weak corporate networks, and communication issues, with self-referential tendencies. However, this study does not look into dimensions of academia-industry collaboration for closing research practice gaps in the context of business studies and management education in Nepal. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive overview of academia-industry collaboration, which can be designed through combined strategies to bridge the research-practice gap in Nepali business schools.

Conceptual Review

Based on theoretical, empirical, and conceptual reviews of literature, this study has taken into consideration (i) methodology & research design based on a survey of the available literature (Robinson, 1998). (ii) Evidence-Based Management (Briner et al., 2009) (iii) Translation & Transformation of Research (Hirschhorn & Geelan, 2008) (iv) Banks et al. (2016) stakeholder engagement as a collaborative factor that can close research-practice gaps related to business studies and management education in Nepal.

Robinson (1998), in a study, indicates that research methodology and design are critical factors necessary for effective and sustainable collaboration between academia and industry. The study argues that existing research methodologies within academic orientations of business schools priorities scientific rigor and generalizability at the expense of contextual relevance. However, effective academia–industry collaboration requires research designs that reflect organizational realities and deal with practical concerns rather than relying exclusively on existing academic approaches. (Robinson, 1998)

Similarly, in their study Hirschhorn and Geelan (2008) have used the concepts of research translation and research transformation to explain how academic knowledge can become practically relevant. Research translation refers to the process of converting scholarly findings into forms that practitioners can understand and apply. Research transformation extends beyond communication by emphasizing the adaptation and reshaping of knowledge throughout the collaborative process.

Evidence-Based Management (EBMgt) provides another important framework for understanding academia–industry collaboration. Briner et al. (2009) define EBMgt as an approach to decision-making that integrates research evidence, practitioner expertise, stakeholder concerns, and contextual information. The principles of EBMgt directly support academia–industry collaboration because organizations committed to evidence-based decision-making are likely to engage with academic institutions to access research expertise and credible knowledge (Briner et al., 2009).

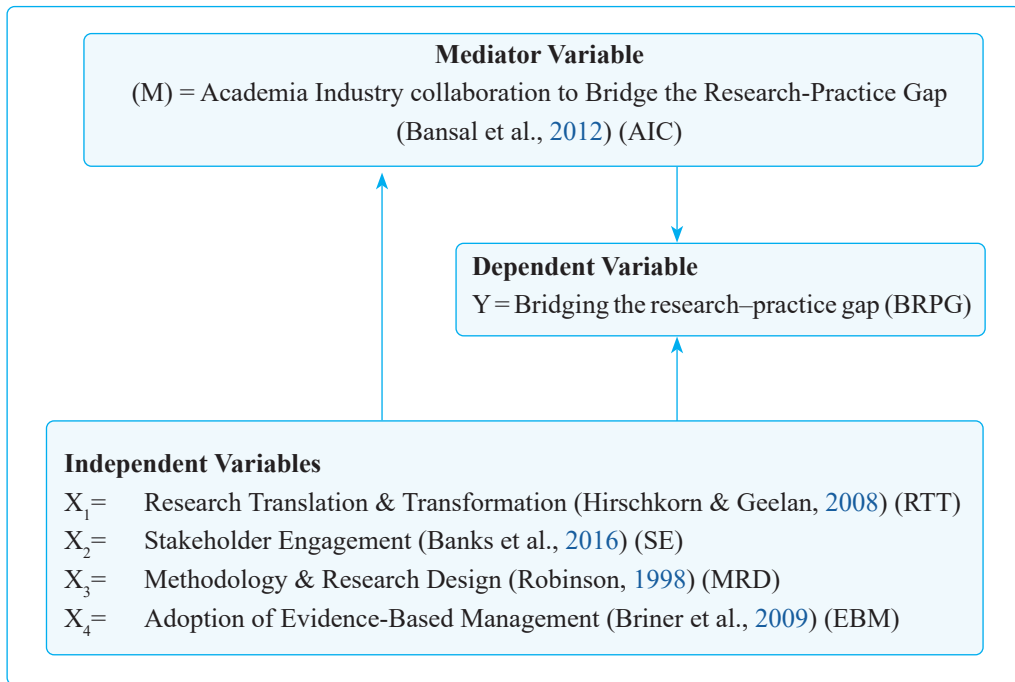
Birnholtz (2007), in a study, argues that academia–industry collaboration depends on the propensity of researchers to engage with external partners and the ability of academics and practitioners to operate across differing organizational cultures and incentive systems and

the alignment of educational and research activities with real-world business needs (Birnholtz, 2007). Furthermore, bridging the research–practice gap reflects the transformation of scholarly knowledge into actionable business solutions, addressing concerns regarding the limited practical applicability, contextual constraints, and communication barriers often associated with academic research (Pittz, 2024). Accordingly, both Birnholtz (2007) and Pittz (2024) indicate that academia–industry collaboration enhances the translation of research into practice and thereby reduces the gap between academic knowledge and business application in Nepalese business schools.

Based on theoretical, empirical, and conceptual reviews of literature, this study argues that the research–practice gap in business education arises from a combination of methodological, structural, and relational challenges. Together, these perspectives form a cohesive framework to examine the influence of academia–industry collaboration in Nepalese business schools for reducing the research–practice gap. This study assumes that applying this integrated framework enables Nepalese business schools to produce actionable and contextually relevant research with industry linkages that narrows the research–practice gap.

Research Framework and Hypothesis

In this study, a conceptual framework has been developed with references to previous studies that have examined different approaches and orientations for reducing the research–practice gap in business studies and management science education. This study includes a conceptual framework that has synthesized four key constructs derived from prior empirical studies and their findings. Here, these four constructs have been identified and examined as collaborative strategies that have the potential for formulating collaboration between business educators and industry professionals for reducing research practice gaps in Nepali business schools.

Figure 1*Conceptual Framework*

In this study includes methodological rigor and contextual sensitivity in research design, research translation and transformation, evidence-based management adoption, and stakeholder engagement as critical antecedents necessary for effective academia-industry collaboration. This study assumes based on Negt & Haunschild (2025) and Paauwe and Van De Voorde (2025) that academia-industry collaboration supported by these antecedents bridges Research–Practice Gap. Hence, based on these constructs and conceptualization following hypothesis have been developed:

Direct Effect Hypotheses on Bridging the research–practice gap

- H1 Methodology & Research Design has a positive and significant effect on Bridging the research–practice gap
- H2 Research Translation & Transformation has a positive and significant effect on Bridging the research–practice gap

- H3 Evidence-based management has a positive and significant effect on Bridging the research–practice gap
- H4 Stakeholder engagement has a positive and significant positive effect on Bridging the research–practice gap

Mediating Role of Academia–Industry Collaboration

- H5 Academia–industry collaboration mediates the relationship between methodology & research design and bridging the research–practice gap.
- H6 Academia–industry collaboration mediates the relationship between research translation & transformation and bridging the research–practice gap.
- H7 Academia–Industry Collaboration mediates the relationship between Evidence-Based Management and Bridging the Research–Practice Gap.

H8 Academia–industry collaboration mediates the relationship between stakeholder engagement and bridging the research–practice gap.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of different antecedents of Academia-Industry Collaboration (AIC) in bridging the research-practice gap in Nepalese business schools. This study has investigated on four key dimensions for possible academia-Industry Collaboration (AIC) such as (i) methodological rigor and contextually sensitive research design, (ii) research translation and transformation, (iii) adoption of evidence-based management, and (iv) stakeholder engagement for bridging research practice gap. To test the hypothesized relationships (H1–H4), multiple regression analysis was utilized, while mediation regression analysis (H5–H8) has been applied following Baron and Kenny (1986). Further, mediation analysis has been applied in this study to examine the mediating effects among the study variables and to better understand the extent to which academia-industry collaboration influences the process of bridging the research-practice gap.

The target population for this study comprised faculty members engaged in research-related teaching, supervision, and scholarly publishing activities in business schools with management sciences and interdisciplinary administration-oriented courses, such as health care management, information management, and business studies programs at graduate and postgraduate levels. A total of 257 faculty members from business schools affiliated with both national and international universities across Koshi, Bagmati, Gandaki, and Lumbini provinces of Nepal participated in the study.

Data were collected between March 3 and April 27, 2026 through both face-to-face surveys and

digital platforms. A convenience sampling strategy was adopted for the approachability of respondents across diverse geographical locations and institutional affiliations. The survey questionnaire was distributed to faculty members in both printed format and electronically through Google Forms, with digital dissemination supported by social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Participation for this study was voluntary, and the respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The sample included faculty members from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, including management and human resource management, marketing, computer science, information management, finance and economics, statistics and research methods, and business communication.

The survey instrument was developed based on an extensive review of literature concerning academia-industry collaboration, research-practice gaps, and management education (Robinson, 1998; Hirschhorn & Geelan, 2008; Briner et al., 2009; Banks et al., 2016; Negt & Haunschild, 2025; Paauwe & Van De Voorde, 2025; Lau et al., 2025). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographic information and Likert-scale items measuring the hypothesized constructs. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Before the main survey, a pilot study involving 57 participants was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument using SPSS Version 21.0. Reliability analysis demonstrates internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.89, exceeding the threshold of 0.70.

In this study, descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, have been used to characterize the sample and response distributions, whereas regression-based analyses, both multiple and mediation, were employed to test the proposed

hypotheses and mediation effects. This study, direct Effects Model is represented by the equation, $BRPG = \beta_0 + \beta_1MRD + \beta_2RTT + \beta_3EBM + \beta_4SE + \varepsilon$, mediator equation entails $AIC = a_0 + a_1MRD + a_2RTT + a_3EBM + a_4SE + \varepsilon_1$ and outcome equation of mediation effect is $BRPG = \beta_0 + c_1MRD + c_2RTT + c_3EBM + c_4SE + \beta AIC + \varepsilon_2$.

Results and Discussion

This section includes the demographic profile, descriptive statistics of the study variables, and multiple regression and mediation analysis between selected variables

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 257)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	157	61.1
	Female	100	38.9
Age	30–39 years	70	27.4
	40–49 years	111	43.3
	50 years and above	75	29.3
Academic Discipline	Management and HRM	58	22.6
	Marketing	46	17.9
	Computer Science	15	5.8
	Information Management	12	4.7
	Finance and Economics	52	20.2
	Statistics and Research Methods	38	14.8
	Business Communication	36	14.0
Teaching Experience	4–8 years	64	24.9
	9–15 years	118	45.9
	Above 15 years	75	29.2
Research Publications	1–3 Publications	93	36.2
	4–6 Publications	103	40.1
	More than 6 Publications	6	

Note. Field Survey (2026)

Importantly, the respondents are orientated with research publication culture in business schools, with over three-quarters (76.3%) have published at least four research papers, and a

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the 257 respondents reveals a predominantly male sample (61.1%) drawn from experienced mid-to-late-career academics, with the majority aged 40–49 years (43.3%) and possessing 9–15 years of teaching experience (45.9%). This seasoned cohort is well-distributed across key business disciplines, with the largest representations from Management and HRM (22.6%), Finance and Economics (20.2%), and Marketing (17.9%), alongside smaller but critical contingents from research-oriented fields like Statistics and Research Methods (14.8%) and Computer Science (5.8%).

substantial 40.1% have 4–6 publications, which indicates that business schools in Nepal have faculty members with the scholarly capacity for voluminous research output.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics reveals a weighted mean values ranging from a low of 2.76 (Methodology & Research Design) to a high of 4.01 (Stakeholder Engagement). The weighted mean value construct, Stakeholder Engagement (4.01), indicates that respondents strongly agree that there is need for active involvement of industry partners throughout research projects. Similarly, Evidence-Based Management (3.92) and Academia-Industry

Collaboration (3.85) have above 3.5 weighted mean value which implies that respondents of study perceive that managers rely on research evidence for decision making. However, the Research Translation & Transformation construct (3.04) falls in the moderate range. Hence, the scope for improvement in converting research into actionable tools remains a challenge in business studies and management education in Nepal.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Construct & Code	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Methodology & Research Design (MRD)			
MRD1	Research projects are designed to address industry problems.	2.51	0.88
MRD2	Industry partners participate in framing research questions.	2.12	0.91
MRD3	Research methodologies used by academics are applicable to organizational contexts.	3.17	0.82
MRD4	Collaborative research designs facilitate practical implementation of findings.	3.23	0.79
	Weighted Mean	2.76	
Research Translation & Transformation (RTT)			
RTT1	Academic findings are translated into practitioner-friendly formats.	3.58	0.81
RTT2	Research outputs are transformed into practical guidelines and tools.	2.49	0.84
RTT3	Researchers effectively communicate findings to industry professionals.	2.56	0.76
RTT4	Collaborative projects adapt research outputs to industry needs.	3.52	0.78
	Weighted Mean	3.04	
Evidence-Based Management (EBM)			
EBM1	Managers rely on research evidence when making decisions.	3.95	0.72
EBM2	Academic research informs organizational policies and practices.	3.88	0.69
EBM3	Industry partners seek research-based solutions.	3.91	0.65

Construct & Code	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
EBM4	Evidence-based decision making strengthens academic-industry partnerships.	3.94	0.62
	Weighted Mean	3.92	
Stakeholder Engagement (SE)			
SE1	Stakeholders' participation is necessary throughout collaborative research projects.	4.03	0.64
SE2	Joint decision-making is required between academics and practitioners.	3.98	0.67
SE3	Industry stakeholders need to contribute to research implementation activities.	4.05	0.61
SE4	Stakeholder involvement improves acceptance of research outcomes.		
	3.99	0.60	
	Weighted Mean	4.01	
Academia-Industry Collaboration (AIC)			
AIC1	My institution needs to collaborate with industry partners.	3.83	0.71
AIC2	Collaborative projects help bridge the research-practice gap.	3.89	0.68
AIC3	Industry engagement improves the relevance of academic research.	3.86	0.72
AIC4	Knowledge exchange between academia and industry makes research effective.	3.82	0.69
	Weighted Mean	3.85	
Bridging the Research-Practice Gap (BPG)			
BPG1	Collaborative research outputs are readily applied in practice.	2.75	0.72
BPG2	Practitioners use findings from academic studies.	2.68	0.84
BPG3	Research designs increasingly address real-world problems.	2.30	0.70
BPG4	There is a visible reduction in the disconnect between theory and practice.	4.12	0.73
	Weighted Mean	2.96	

Note. Field Survey (2026)

Similarly, the low weighted means for Bridging the Research-Practice Gap (2.96) and particularly Methodology & Research Design (2.76), with individual items like “Industry partners participate in framing research questions”

has lowest value as 2.12, which reveals a critical weakness: research activities in business schools are still designed without sufficient industry input, and collaborative outputs. Here, interestingly, the unexpectedly high mean value for BPG4 (visible

reduction in disconnects, 4.12) stands in contrast to the other BPG items, which indicates that faculty members of business schools perceive progress in theory-practice alignment even when

other specific collaborative mechanisms have been either overwhelmingly underutilized or remains unfunctional in business schools.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis (Model 1 Statistics)

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value	Sig. F	Durbin–Watson
.673	.453	.438	31.42	.0012*	1.94

Note. Dependent Variable: Bridging the research–practice gap

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis (β Coefficient)

Model 1	β	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	VIF
Constant	0.942	0.391	2.153	.013*	–
Methodology & Research Design	0.171	0.061	1.328	.076	1.74
Research Translation & Transformation	0.164	0.058	1.103	.082	1.89
Evidence-Based Management	0.347	0.071	4.887	.022*	2.11
Stakeholder Engagement	0.401	0.069	5.812	.012*	2.26

Note. *p < .05

The model explains 45.3% of the variance in Academia–Industry Collaboration ($R^2 = .453$). As the above table indicates Evidence-Based Management and Stakeholder Engagement significantly influences bridging of the research–practice gap, whereas Methodology & Research Design and Research Translation & Transformation do not show significant effects. The regression results indicate that Evidence-Based Management ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < .022$) and Stakeholder Engagement

($\beta = 0.401$, $p < .012$) significantly and positively influence bridging the research–practice gap in business schools. However, Methodology & Research Design ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = .076$) and Research Translation & Transformation ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = .082$) do not indicate statistically significant effects. The model explains 45.3% of the variance in academia–industry collaboration ($R^2 = .453$). VIF values ranging from 1.74 to 2.26 indicate the absence of multicollinearity concerns.

Table 5

The Mediating Role of Academia–Industry Collaboration

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value	Sig. F	Durbin–Watson
.711	.506	.497	58.64	.012*	2.01

Note. Dependent Variable: Bridging Research–Practice Gap (BRPG)

Table 6*Model 1 Statistics*

Independent Variable	Direct Effect (c')	Indirect Effect via AIC (a×b)	Boot SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Mediation Result
Methodology & Research Design	0.171	0.318*	0.024	0.014	0.108	Supported
Research Translation & Transformation	0.164	0.376*	0.021	0.009	0.094	Supported
Evidence Based Management	0.347 *	0.447*	0.063	0.131	0.374	Supported
Stakeholder Engagement	0.401*	0.586*	0.071	0.154	0.432	
	Supported					

Note. *p <.05 (two-tailed)

The mediation analysis reveals that academia–industry collaboration significantly mediates the relationships between the four drivers and bridging the research–practice gap. Although, methodology and research design and research translation and transformation are not statistically significant ($p >.05$), the indirect effects through academia–industry collaboration are statistically significant at 0.05. The positive and significant mediation effect has been observed for Stakeholder Engagement ($\beta = 0.586$), followed by Evidence-Based Management ($\beta = 0.447$), Research Translation & Transformation ($\beta = 0.376$) and Methodology & Research Design ($\beta = 0.318$). Hence, the findings of mediation analysis suggest that academia–industry collaboration is a critical mechanism through which both organizational and scholarly oriented research practices can formulate a collaborative effort together to close the research–practice gap.

This study examined the influence of methodology & research design, research translation & transformation, evidence-based management (EBM), and stakeholder engagement on bridging the research–practice gap (BRPG) and further investigated the mediating role of academia–industry collaboration (AIC) in bridging the research–practice gap (BRPG) in Nepalese business schools. The regression model explained 45.3% of the variance in academia–industry collaboration which indicates that the selected predictors provide substantial explanatory power

for understanding collaborative relationships between academic institutions and industry partners.

The findings of regression analysis reveal that evidence-based management and stakeholder engagement significantly and positively influence bridging the research–practice gap, thereby supporting hypotheses H3 and H4. In contrast, Methodology & Research Design and Research Translation & Transformation demonstrate positive yet statistically insignificant direct effects on bridging the research–practice gap; hence, Hypotheses H1 and H2 have been partially rejected. These results suggest that although research quality and knowledge translation remain conceptually important for narrowing the research–practice gap, they do not independently drive collaborative engagement between academic institutions and industries in the Nepalese context (Wickert et al., 2021).

Among the antecedents, stakeholder engagement has emerged as the most significant determinant of academia–industry collaboration ($\beta = .401, p < .012$) for bridging the research–practice gap. This finding aligns with Banks et al. (2016), which states that collaboration between academia and industry depends on active participation, shared ownership, and continuous interaction among academics, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders throughout the research process. This finding is also consistent with concept of

collaboration propensity by Birnholtz (2007), which states that individuals and organizations collaborate when they perceive mutual benefits and shared value creation.

Similarly, the result supports the argument of boundary-spanning mechanism that effective partnerships between academia and industry require continuous interaction among professional operating across different organizational cultures and incentive structures (Paauwe & Van De Voorde, 2025). From a stakeholder theory perspective (Banks et al., 2016), the findings also confirm that collaboration is enhanced when diverse stakeholders are engaged throughout the research process. The explanatory power of stakeholder engagement in this study suggests that this perspective offers a substantial theoretical foundations for both understanding and addressing the research-practice gap in Nepalese business schools.

As the data analysis and findings indicate, evidence-based management has demonstrated a significant positive effect on bridging the research–practice gap ($\beta=.347$, $p < .032$). This finding reinforces the proposition of Briner et al. (2009) that business organizations need scientific evidence, professional expertise, organizational data, and stakeholder perspectives for effective discussion making. Here, faculty members associated with business schools also perceive that academic researchers need to adopt evidence-based approaches for bridging the research–practice gap because managers, entrepreneurs, corporate industries, and business communities recognize evidence-based knowledge as a foundation for effective decision-making (Lau et al., 2025)

Moreover, as Lamichhane (2024) discusses in an article, Nepali universities have limited emphasis on contextual evidence-based research outputs, which has limited engagement between academics and practitioners. Nevertheless, this study indicates that from the perspective of faculty members at business schools, evidence-based

managerial cultures exist in Nepal that can enhance academia–industry relationships necessary for bridging the research–practice gap in business schools.

Contrary to assumed relationship, methodology & research design did not significantly influence bridging of research–practice gap ($\beta=.171$, $p=.076$). Although rigorous methodological approaches are essential for reliable and credible research, the findings suggest that methodological considerations alone are not sufficient to motivate collaborative engagement between academic and industry partners. And the data interpretation derived from analysis remains consistent with Shapiro et al. (2007) that the difference between knowledge production and knowledge transfer is a consistent perplexity in business research. Hence, this study also finds that methodological excellence does not necessarily translate into collaborative relationships without mechanisms, messages, and methods that demonstrate the practical value of research for practitioners.

Research Translation & Transformation also did not exhibit a significant direct effect on bridging the research–practice gap ($\beta=.164$, $p=.082$). While knowledge translation has been recognized as a necessary mechanism for narrowing the research–practice gap, this study argues that bridging of bridging the research–practice gap depends on relational factors rather than on dissemination activities. Kieser and Leiner (2009) explain this phenomenon through systems theory, with an indication that academia and industry operate as distinct social systems characterized by different communication patterns, objectives, and evaluation criteria. The finding also resonates with Ojha (2025) that inadequate corporate networks and weak communication channels significantly contribute to the persistence of the research–practice gap in Nepal.

The mediation analysis provides further insights into the mechanisms through which

these factors contribute to bridging the research–practice gap. The results indicate that academia–industry collaboration significantly mediates the relationships between methodology & research design, research translation & transformation, evidence-based management, stakeholder engagement, and BRPG, thereby supporting hypotheses H5, H6, H7, and H8. Notably, the direct effects of two variable on BRPG were not statistically significant, whereas the indirect effects through academia–industry collaboration are significant. These findings suggest that research-related practices of business schools reduce the research–practice gap through collaborative interactions between academic institutions and industry stakeholders (Negt & Haunschild, 2025; Lau et al., 2025). Through collaboration, stakeholders gain opportunities to co-create knowledge, align research objectives with practical needs, and facilitate the implementation of academic research findings within their organizational settings. This interpretation supports Banks et al. (2016) argument that collaborative knowledge production enhances the relevance, legitimacy, and utilization of research.

Furthermore, the findings of mediation analysis of this study indicate that methodology & research design and research translation & transformation also contribute to bridging the research–practice gap when they are embedded within collaborative structures. Here, the finding reinforces argument of Perry (2014) that knowledge creation and implementation occur across institutional boundaries rather than within isolated academic or industrial settings. Hence, it is necessary to develop knowledge tools and communication platforms that facilitate interaction between researchers and practitioners through knowledge-sharing networks, digital collaboration platforms, practitioner-oriented publications, executive education programs, and policy dialogues.

In Nepal business schools operate within a complex ecosystem of industry partners, faculty, professional associations, students, and policymakers; hence, as the framework of Briner et al. (2009) suggests, integrating research evidence with professional expertise, organizational values, and stakeholder concerns in decision-making is foundational for improving academic–industry collaborations in Nepal. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that the research–practice gap is not attributable to a single cause but rather results from multiple, interrelated factors that span institutional structures, individual behaviors, knowledge practices, and cultural orientations (Negt & Haunschild, 2025)

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that evidence-based management and stakeholder engagement are critical drivers for bridging the research–practice gap in Nepalese business education, while methodology and research translation alone do not exert significant direct effects. Academia–industry collaboration emerges as the central mediating mechanism through which all examined factors influence gap reduction, confirming that structural and relational integration between universities and industry is more impactful than isolated improvements in research design or dissemination.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings advance theoretical understanding by integrating stakeholder theory, systems theory, evidence-based management, and knowledge translation into a pluralistic framework. This multi-theoretical approach reflects the complex, multi-causal nature of the research–practice gap and suggests that no single lens suffices for explaining or addressing it. Empirically, the study validates academia–industry collaboration as a boundary-spanning construct that reconciles the divergent goals, norms, and performance criteria of academic and industry

systems. It further extends stakeholder theory by positioning faculty perceptions of evidence-based practices and engagement as prerequisites for effective collaboration—prior to methodological rigor or research transformation efforts.

Practical and Policy Implications

For university administrators and business schools, the results underscore the need to institutionalize continuous industry interaction through advisory boards, joint research centers, practitioner forums, and innovation projects. Faculty incentive structures should be realigned to reward applied, collaborative research alongside traditional scholarly outputs. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission in Nepal should prioritize strategic funding, regulatory support, and capacity-building programs that formalize and sustain academia–industry partnerships.

From a managerial standpoint, closing the research–practice gap requires deliberate institutional mechanisms—such as executive education programs, practitioner-oriented publications, digital collaboration platforms, and faculty–industry exchange initiatives—that foster ongoing knowledge co-creation. Business schools must embed evidence-based management and stakeholder engagement into their core strategies to ensure research remains relevant, actionable, and responsive to real-world industry challenges.

Directions for Future Research

Given the rapid advancement of digital technologies, future studies should examine how AI-enabled platforms, virtual research partnerships, innovation hubs, and big data analytics can further strengthen academia–industry linkages. Additionally, as this study relies on perception-based data from faculty members, subsequent research should employ objective organizational metrics, longitudinal designs, multi-stakeholder perspectives, and contextual case studies to validate and extend these findings. Such efforts will

enhance the generalizability and causal robustness of the proposed framework..

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