

Extending Business Education to Underserved Sectors: Barriers and Opportunities in the Age of Technological Disruption

Xiao Sunny Li

New Jersey Institute of Technology, the United States

Abstract

Rapid technological disruption in the age of AI is exposing gaps in how industries prepare their current and future workforce to navigate innovation and change, creating both challenges and opportunities for business education. Built environment design professions, such as architects and related designers, offer a focused lens to examine these dynamics. Despite their creative strengths, these fields face persistent struggles with entrepreneurship, change management, and business models. Dual master's programs with business schools exist but remain costly and often misaligned with sector-specific needs. Few executive or continuing education offerings are tailored to the working cultures, structural constraints, and other barriers of these underserved sectors. This research identifies cultural, structural, and educational barriers that limit access to business education across creative professions, professional services, and the vast construction and real estate industries. Using architecture as a primary case, the study integrates curriculum and literature review, return-on-investment and trend analysis, and structured interviews examined through a case-based approach to surface unmet learning needs and the drivers behind education choices in underserved sectors. Findings highlight both opportunities and constraints for business schools to expand their role through interdisciplinary programming and more accessible continuing education. By positioning creative and technical professions as an underserved audience, this paper explores how business education can better align with sector-specific needs and rising demand for entrepreneurship, innovation, and organizational adaptability, while offering business schools pathways to deepen their cross-sector relevance.

Keywords: designer; continuing-education; entrepreneurship; change; workforce