



ACCOUNTING TEACHING, RESEARCH AND ACCREDITATION

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Abstract

Accreditation is becoming a widely accepted form of program assessment in higher education. The Association to Advance Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is the dominant form of accreditation for both business programs in general and accounting programs specifically. With high research expectations, AACSB accreditation seems to place “teaching” institutions at a disadvantage in gaining accreditation compared to “research” institutions. Forcing “teaching” schools to adopt rigorous research standards may have detrimental consequences to teaching, which is at the very heart of “teaching” institutions.

The benefits of AACSB accreditation need to be measured against the high cost of achieving this accreditation. Other means of signaling accounting program credibility, such as International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), may be a viable alternative to separate AACSB accounting program accreditation.

Keywords

Accreditation, AACSB, Teaching, Accounting, Higher Education

Introduction

The covid19 virus has added to the already existing competition for declining number of eligible higher education students. Research institutions and teaching institutions had niche markets of students that both served well. However, as the competition for students has increased, so research institutions now compete over many of the same students. One means to market and differentiate programs is to signal institution credibility by means of external accreditation.

The accreditation provided by the Advance Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has become the dominate form of signaling business program credibility, and it is growing in terms of separate accounting program credibility. While few question the integrity of AACSB accreditation, many question the value of this accreditation when considering the high cost of achieving this accreditation. AACSB accreditation is expense not only financially, but also in terms of faculty and staff time and effort. An alternative to AACSB accreditation is International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) accreditation. Yalin and Aktaş (2023) discuss the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) as alternative accreditation bodies.

Initially, this research will attempt to define a few of the key terms in order to attempt to understand and analyze the existing available information.

Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC)

Many colleges and universities face a declining number of students (Neff, 2019). A great deal of time and efforts is expended not only in attracting and retaining students but also ensuring a quality learning experience and education, Fein (2014). Many years ago (1992), the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) addressed the need for accounting education to change. Williams (1991) reviewed the critiques of accounting education: One, there is a lack of number students studying accounting, and these students often lack the necessary preparatory skills to learn accounting; two, accounting programs have lost significance; three, accounting programs need to focus on the knowledge, skills, and professional orientation of accounting students. Accounting programs have changed. According to Wilson and Baldwin (1995), there has been an enhanced the attention of ethical issues in accounting and international issues. Additionally, Wilson and Baldwin (1995) note a progression from a

computation emphasis to conceptual emphasis. Yet, Lux (2000) acknowledges that accounting instructors need additional training in in what manner to educate in a restructuring- uniform approach. Zhou and Lamberton (2021) demonstrate a scaffolded learning technique that significantly reduces cognitive load; resulting in positive feedback, and increased comprehension of accounting principles.

Accreditation has become that standard model for assessing business programs, and accreditation is used to signal program quality (Park et al. 2017). Program assessment and accreditation by the American Association of College School of Business, (AACSB), is the current trend to assess business programs in not only the United States but also internationally (Prasad et al, 2019). AACSB accreditation (in general, Stepanovich et al., 2014) and the pass-rate on the uniform Certified Public Accountant examination pass rate (specifically, Yunker, 2005) are two commonly used measures to assess accounting program quality.

Fortunately, in these times of a general decline in enrollment, the size of accounting programs continues to increase, and the number accountants demanded in the marketplace continues to rise (US. Department of Labor Statistics, 2020). The strong pull of the market for accounting graduates (Aldani, 2021) ensures a bright future for accounting educators.

The initial step in this research is to provide a working definition of the key terms used in this research: teaching institutions, research, and accreditation. After deriving working definitions of these key definitions and related conceptual constructs, an analysis of how these definitions and constructs relate to one another is provided. Finally, an integrating analysis provides a structure of how to efficiently and effectively bundle the assessment of teaching and research to maximize the education and learning in various accounting programs.

Research and Teaching and Institutions

While teaching and learning are the most crucial part of higher education, according to Rogers (2019). However, the relative importance of teaching versus research can be significant. O'Shaughnessy (2012) defines a "research" institution in terms of priorities: research is the top priority at "research" institutions; graduate students are the second priority at research universities; and the third and last priority are undergraduate students. Magi and Beerkens (2016) find research-active teachers are more likely to incorporate research outcomes into teaching, to engage students in research groups, and co-publish with students.

However, teaching may not be valued as highly at research institutions because it is difficult to measure the quality of teaching, and student teaching evaluations can vary based on if students are given the opportunity and time to evaluate directly in class versus using online evaluations, Treischl and Wolbring, 2017. However, it is relatively straightforward quantify professor's research output, for example, the number of peer-reviewed research papers published (Curran, et al., 2020). Graduate students are the primary contact for undergraduate students (Bailey, 2020). While professors deliver lessons from a large lecture hall, the graduate students conduct recitations; administer and grade tests; and hold discussion groups Lorusso et al., 2020).

According to Bak and Kim (2015), because research is the dominant force, good teaching does not seem to be a priority. Wieman (2017) notes that because university administrators are not compensated for quality of teaching, they neither know nor care about quality teaching: research is carefully measured and compared across 'research' institutions, but teaching is not measured.

Between 'research' institutions and 'teaching institutions, there are master's-level institutions, Stamatoplos et al. (2016). Fantuzzo (2018) recognizes that while research institutions command the highest education status, there a much greater number of students at master's-level institutions. These master's-level institutions schools have fewer, if any, PhD programs than 'research' institutions; and they have a greater commitment and emphasis on undergraduate students (Goode, 2021). The general perception of 'teaching' institutions is often viewed at the 'bottom' tier of higher education institutions (Xie and Teo, 2020). While there are many academically excellent public and private 'teaching' institutions, the 'flag-ship,' land-grant institutions, with their huge athletic programs and publicity, likely dominate the general public's perception of institutional strength and rank (Civik and Stepankova, 2020).

One might easily define a teaching institution of higher education as one in which teaching is emphasized. On the other hand, a research institutions of higher education as one in which research is emphasized. However, and extensive review of the literature fails to provide adequate working definitions of both types of institutions. But, a third type of higher education emerged in the process: masters-level institutions. One could easily add community-colleges and vocational colleges as subsets of teaching institutions, along with bachelor-level colleges. Form a historical perspective, the definition and original purposes of "normal" colleges might provide insight into this wide array of institutions of higher education.

"Normal" schools were established with government funding in order for working-class individual to train as teachers, (Franklin 2020). Community-colleges emerged to help satisfy the growing demand for higher education (Allen, 1995), and vocational colleges (Dougherty and Bakia, 2000) can provide specific required industrial training.

Ulrich (2007) provides three descriptions of a ‘teaching’ institution: first, they have a stress on undergraduate education rather research; second, they focus on bachelor’s degrees; and third, they are not research institutions. O’Keefe et al. (2015) define a ‘teaching’ institution is one that emphasizes “learning and the transformative nature of education.” Minakaro (2020) argues that library resources are important for both teaching and research institutions. Teaching institutions are being restricted, which is reflected in both governance and faculty interactions, according to Carvalho and Videira (2019). Goyal et al (2023) provide an example of teaching and research.

Accreditation

Klassen and Sa (2020) discuss an emerging general approach of the use of accreditation in higher education in both terms of governance and structure; and this rise of the use of accreditation could be strongly influenced by professional associations. More specifically, Porter and McKibbin (1988) predict that accreditation will become the dominant form of assessment in business higher education. Moreover, Henderson and Jordon (1990) discuss the International Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation and accounting higher education. Furthermore, AACSB accreditation stresses the important of research, according to Jacob, Reinmuth, and Hamada, 1987). Bryant and Baltar (2019) discuss specifically both formation and implementation of AACSB’s separate accounting accreditation standards and how this separate accreditation make sure that accounting programs support accounting practice. Arlinghaus (2002) emphasizes the necessity of the education environment include interaction with accounting professional as well as internships that include significant and functional involvement in the practice of public accounting, and Wade et al. (2006) also empathizes this same importance in management accounting. Cartmill et al. (2023) discuss the implications of the accreditation process during COVID-19.

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)

AACSB accounting accreditation and standards continues to evolve, Bryant (2018). Woodside (2020) examined the education objectives for undergraduate business curricula, identified the degree of position with Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) advice, and recommend for constant upgrades. Research at teaching institutions is possibly the greatest difficult part of the AACSB accreditation process; specifically, the structure of teaching staff driven to publish peer-reviewed journal research publications Hinnenkamp et al. (2019). Furthermore, Hinnenkamp et al. (2019) recognize that teaching institutions not only under-emphasized research but also fail to compensate for research, so the task of transforming into a research ethos is huge. However, Gray et al. (2017) found both slight emphasis compensation for teaching staff participating in assessment endeavors. An alternative to AACSB accreditation is International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), Chronicle of Higher Education (2008). However, the IACBE accreditation is neither as well recognized nor has the volume of accredited institutions compared to AACSB accreditation, Fox and Finney (2007). MacLennan et al. (2016) include International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) in their research and find no difference between DBAs and PhDs.

Research

Research (Ahmed Irshad, 2020) can be used to assess quality, and research can be used a one component of how to assess the quality of business programs and accounting programs. By requiring faculty to publish, their research provides a strong signal that the faculty members are not only staying current with an evolving area of study but also demonstrates an active role in the continuing contribution to the various professions (Kane and Zollman, 2015).

The “perfect” storm of the financial crises is a result, in part, the failure of the educational system (Albrect Et al., 2019). As the legal organizations continue to become more complex, according to Divisekara et al. (2020), so do the financial instruments used in these organization become more complex. There has long been a need for accounting educations not only need to understand (Hayali, 2012) but also be able to teach how these complex structures and instruments are recorded and reported (Muellerleile, 2015).

Overriding the importance of these technical standards, according to Linarelli (2017) is the knowledge of strict adherence to the highest set of ethical standards upon which our capital markets are built. Kanatas and Stefanadis (2014) find that capital markets that place stress on responsibility demonstrate a lower net cost of capital, increased economies of scale, enhance access to capital inflows and superior collective prosperity. Efficient capital markets exist where publicly traded companies provide investors, creditors and other stakeholders with relevant, reliable and timely information; and accounting and auditing are necessary elements in the flow of accounting information to efficiency capital market (Rahaman and Hossain, 2014). However, in other academic areas, the value of accreditation is questioned, Kumar et al. (2023).

Analysis

This research analyzes the costs and benefits of separate accounting accreditation (Kuo et al, 2017). The primary benefit of separate accounting accreditation seems to be an on-going review process. Keevy (2020) discusses pervasive skills and prestigious is the AACSB's separate accounting program accreditation. Separate accounting accreditation not only has direct financial costs but also the less easily quantifiable indirect costs, non-financial costs, and cultural effects (Taylor and Finley, (2009).

For many accounting teaching-programs, the path toward separate accounting accreditation is long, involving significant work and a substantial devotion of time, efforts, and resources (Bayerlein and Timpson, 2017). However, the process can result in considerable quality improvements, especially with respect to a program's strategic planning, qualifications of instructors, and most importantly student education (Woo, 2003). Accounting programs contemplating the separate accounting accreditation process need to recognize not only the benefits but also the costs of successful accreditation (Gilead, 2014).

Business programs in general, and accounting programs increasingly, are using the goal of American Association of College School of Business (AACSB) accreditation as the acceptable norm for assessing education (Solomon, 2017). However, the AACSB accreditation requires high research expectations not only for "research" institutions but also "teaching" institutions. While research is a legitimate signal to the quality of an education program, how research is defined and measured should vary by type of institution. The research expectations at "teaching" institutions should by the very nature of the institution be different from the research expectations at "research institutions. Forcing "teaching institutions into a "one size fits all" measure research will likely diminish the value and quality of the teaching and learning that takes place at "teaching" institutions. And it is important to remember, according to Kaufman (1993) that college majors frequently demonstrate only minimally.

For teaching-institutions, the road to separate accounting accreditation is long, requiring a substantial devotion of time, effort, and resources (Hatfield and Taylor, 19980; however, the process can result in considerable quality improvements, especially with respect to a program's strategic planning, qualifications of instructors, and most importantly student education. Accounting programs contemplating the separate accounting accreditation process need to recognize not only the benefits but also the costs of successful accreditation (Roller, Andrews, and Bovee, 2003).

The most tangible benefits from separate accounting accreditation stem from the core modifications to the programs that result from the on-going separate accreditation process (Claybaugh et al., 2020). The process forces a program, according to Cavaliere and Mayer (2012) to focus on its strategic plan, to develop an operational policy of the education process, and to safeguard that its program instructors are faculty is adequate in number and sufficiently competent. Aliyu (2017) discuss the importance of libraries as part of the accreditation of process.

Separate accounting accreditation may result in higher salaries for accounting program graduates, and separate accounting accreditation may enhance a program's skill to hire instructors Czajkowski et al., 2020); however, these benefits will likely be realized by smaller regional institutions (Rossetto and Chapple, 2019). Furthermore, according to Day (2013) the general effect of separate accounting accreditation on student enrollment, student employment, instructor faculty hiring, and alumni-relations is likely to be small.

The Certified Public Accounting (CPA) Exam

Marts et al. (1988) claim that business schools often attain accreditation to validate program effectiveness; they theorized that students from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB)-accredited accounting programs out-perform students on the Certified Public Accounting (CPA) Exam than students non-AACSB-accredited programs. Barilla et al. (2008) extend this research to recruiters and suggest that if firms seek students and future employees who are best apt to pass the CPA exam, these firms should begin by recruiting students from institutions that have earned AACSB accreditation. Davis (2021) found no relationship between academic results and a survey relating to self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, self-determination, and self-regulated learning.

Summary and Conclusions

This research analyzes the costs and benefits of separate accounting accreditation. The primary benefit of separate accounting accreditation is on-going review process. Even more prestigious is the AACSB's separate accounting program accreditation. Separate accounting accreditation not only has direct financial costs but also the less easily quantifiable indirect costs, non-financial costs, and cultural effects.

For many accounting teaching-programs, the path toward separate accounting accreditation is long, involving significant work and a substantial devotion of time, efforts, and resources. However, the process can result in considerable quality improvements, especially with respect to a program's strategic planning, qualifications of instructors, and most importantly student education. Accounting programs contemplating the

separate accounting accreditation process need to recognize not only the benefits but also the costs of successful accreditation.

Business programs in general and accounting programs increasingly are using the goal of American Association of College School of Business (AACSB) accreditation as the acceptable norm for assessing education. However, the AACSB accreditation requires high research expectations not only for “research” institutions but also “teaching” institutions. While research is a legitimate signal to the quality of an education program, how research is defined and measured should vary by type of institution. The research expectations at “teaching” institutions should by the very nature of the institution is different from the research expectations at “research institutions. Forcing “teaching institutions into a “one size fits all” measure research will likely diminish the value and quality of the teaching and learning that takes place at “teaching” institutions. And it is important to remember, according to Kaufman (1993) that college majors frequently demonstrate only minimally.

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Separate accounting accreditation may result in higher salaries for accounting program graduates, and separate accounting accreditation may enhance a program’s skill to hire instructors. These benefits will likely be realized by smaller regional institutions. However, the general effect of separate accounting accreditation on student enrollment, student employment, instructor faculty hiring, and alumni-relations is likely to be small.

Separate Advance Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accounting program accreditation adds credibility to a program. However, the high cost of achieving this separate accreditation must be weighed against the high costs incurred. Teaching institutions, versus research institutions, may be a significant disadvantage in attempting to earn this accreditation due to the high research standards associated with accreditation. Upper Iowa University (2005) emphasizes value for the education. With the cost of higher education continuing to escalate, accounting programs at teaching institutions need to carefully consider how scarce financial, faculty, and administrative resources are allocated to establish the credibility of accounting programs at teaching institutions.

Limitations

This research has made extensive use of the existing literature to analyze teaching institutions, research and separate accounting accreditation. The value of this research would be extended by providing empirical evidence to the actual costs and estimated benefits in achieving separate accounting accreditation. It would be of further interest to consider the similarities differences among private bachelors-level institutions, publicly supported masters-level institutions, and land-grant doctoral-level institutions. Future research may consider including the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) as alternative accreditation bodies, consistent with Yalın and Aktaş (2023).

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